STUDIES IN GERMAN IDEALISM

GERMAN IDEALISM AND THE PROBLEM OF KNOWLEDGE

by Nectarios G. Limnatis

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GERMAN IDEALISM AND THE PROBLEM OF KNOWLEDGE:
KANT, FICHTE, SCHELLING, AND HEGEL

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For Monika

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Kant

Kant's works are cited in the text from the edition Immanuel Kant, *Werke in 12 Bänden,* hrsg. v. Wilhelm Weischedel (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 1968). References to the German text pertain to the standard A and B pagination, except from the "*New Elucidation* …" which is cited by page from vol. I, pp. 401–509. English translations (see bibliography) have been modified where necessary. I have used the following abbreviations:

NE = *Neue Erhellung der ersten Grundsätze metaphysischer Erkenntnis (Principiorum Primorum Congitionis Methaphysicae Nova Dilucitadio)* (Vol. I, pp. 402–509).

ATT = *Versuch den Begriff der negative Größen in die Weltweisheit einzuführen* (Vol. II, pp. 775–820).

CPR = *Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (Vols. III–IV).

PFM = *Prolegomena zu einer jeden künftigen Metaphysik, die als Wissenschaft wird auftreten können* (Vol. V, pp. 109–264).

JL = *Logik* (Vol. VI, pp. 417–582).

WP = *Welches sind die Wirklichen Fortschritte, die die Metaphysik seit Leibnitzens und Wolf's Zeiten in Deutschland gemacht hat?* (Vol. VI, pp. 583–676).

MA = *Metaphysische Anfangsgründe der Naturwissenschaft* (Vol. IX, pp. 7–135).

CJ = *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (Vol. X).

TP1 = *Theoretical Philosophy 1755–70,* translated and edited by David Walford in collaboration with Ralf Meerbote (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

TP2 = *Theoretical Philosophy after 1781,* translated by Henry Allison, Michael Friedman, Gary Hatfield, and Peter

Heath; ed. by Henry Allison and Peter Heath (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

LL = *Lectures on Logic,* translated and edited by J. Michael Young (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

Fichte

Fichte's works are cited in the text from the edition *Fichtes Werke in 11 Bd.,* hrsg. v. I.H. Fichte (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1971). Pages from the corresponding English translations are also indicated unless these reproduce the original German pagination. Translations have been modified where necessary. I have used the following abbreviations:

UBW = *Über den Begriff der Wissenschaftslehre oder der sogenannten Philosophie* (1794, 1798[2]), (Vol. 1, pp. 29–81).

GGW = *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre (*1794, 1802[2]), (Vol. 1, pp. 83–328).

GEW = *Grundriss des Eigentümlichen der Wissenschaftslehre, in Rücksicht auf das theoretische Vermögen* (1795, 1802), (Vol. 1, pp. 329–411).

EEW = *Erste Einleitung in die Wissenschaftslehre* (1797), (Vol. 1, pp. 417–49).

ZEW = *Zweite Einleitung in die Wissenschaftslehre für Leser, die schon ein philosophisches System haben* (1797), (Vol.1, pp. 451–518).

BBW = *Bericht über den Begriff der Wissenschaftslehre und die bisherigen Schicksale derselben* (1806), (Vol. VIII, pp. 361–407).

EVW = *Einleitungsvorlesungen in die Wissenschaftslehre* (1813), (Vol. IX, pp. 1–102).

UVL = *Über das Verhältniß der Logik zur Philosophie oder transscendentale Logik* (1812), (Vol. IX, pp. 103–400).

TB = *Die Tatsachen des Bewußtseins* (1813), (Vol. IX, pp. 401–574).

RA = *Review of Aenesidemus* (1792), in Giovanni, G. di, Harris H.S. *Texts in the Development of Post-Kantian Idealism* (New York: SUNY, 1985), pp. 136–58.

FIS = *First Introduction to the Science of Knowledge,* In J.G. Fichte, *Science of Knowledge with the First and Second Introductions,* edited and translated by P. Heath and J. Lachs. Cambridge: (Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 1–28.

SIS = *Second Introduction to the Science of Knowledge,* ibid., pp. 29–86.
FES = *Foundations of the Entire Science of Knowledge,* ibid., pp. 87–286.
CCW = *Concerning the Concept of the* Wissenschaftslehre *or, of So-called "Philosophy".* In: *Fichte. Early Philosophical Writings,* translated and edited by D. Breazeale (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), pp. 94–135.
ODC = *Outline of the distinctive character of the Wissenschaftslehre with respect to the Theoretical Faculty,* ibid., pp. 233–306.

Schelling

Schelling's works are cited in the text from the standard edition F.W.J. Schelling, *Sämtliche Werke in 14 Bänden,* hrsg. v. K.F.A. Schelling (Stuttgart and Augsburg: J.G. Cotta, 1856–61). I have used the available English translations (see bibliography) which reproduce the original German pagination. The only exception is A. Bowie's translation of *Zur Geschichte der neueren Philosophie.* Pages from this translation are therefore indicated in my text as well. English translations have been modified where necessary. I have used the following abbreviations:

UM = *Ueber die Möglichkeit einer Form des Philosophie überhaupt* (Vol. 1: 85–148).
IP = *Vom Ich als Prinzip der Philosophie oder über das Unbedingte im menschlichen Wissen* (Vol. 1: 149–244).
PB = *Philosophische Briefe über Dogmatismus und Kritizismus* (Vol. 1: 281–342).
AE = *Abhandlungen zur Erläuterung des Idealismus der Wissenschaftslehre* (Vol. 1: 343– 462).
IPN = *Ideen zu einer Philosophie der Natur* (Vol. 2: 1–344).
STI = *System des Transzendentalen Idealismus* (Vol. 3: 327–634).
DMS = *Darstellung meiZes Systems der Philosophie* (Vol. 4: 105–212).
FD = *Fernere Darstellungen aus dem System der Philosophie* (Vol. 4: 333–510).
DWV = Aus: *Darstellung der Wahren Verhältnisses der Naturphilosophie in der verbesserten Fichteschen Lehre* (Vol. 7: 50–65).

AEN = *Aphorismen zur Einleitung in die Naturphilosophie* (7: 140–97).
PU = *Philosophische Untersuchungen über das Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit* (Vol. 7:331–416).
W = *Die Weltalter. Erstes Buch* (Vol. 8: 195–344).
UZ = *Ueber den Zusammenhang der Natur mit der Geisterwelt* (Vol. 9: 1–110).
GNP = *Zur Geschichte der neueren Philosophie* (Vol. 10: 1–200).

Hegel

German citations of Hegel are cited in the text from the edition Hegel G.W.F. *Werke in 20 Bänden,* Redaktion Eva Moldenhauer und Karl Markus Michel (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1970). Where available, references to English translations (modified when necessary) are also provided in the text as English texts do not reproduce the German pagination. I have used the following abbreviations:

DZ = *Differenz des Fichte 'schen und Schelling' schen Systems der Philosophie* (Vol. 2: 8–138).
VSP = *Verhältnis des Skeptizismus zur Philosophie. Darstellung seiner verschiedenen Modifikationen und Vergleichumg des neuesten mit dem Alten* (Vol. 2: 213–76).
GW = *Glauben und Wissen* (Vol. 2: 287–434).
WDA = *Wer denkt abstrakt?* (Vol. 2: 575–81).
PG = *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (Vol. 3).
WL1 = *Wissenschaft der Logik, I (Vol. 5)*
WL2 = *Wissenschaft der Logik II (Vol. 5).*
R = *Philosophie des Rechts* (Vol. 7).
ENZ1 = *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften I* (Vol. 8).
ENZ2 = *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften II* (Vol. 9).
ENZ3 = *Enzyklopädie der philosophischen Wissenschaften III* (Vol. 10).
RI = *Rezension: Der Idealrealismus. Erster Teil. Von A.L.J. Ohlert* (Vol. 11: 467–86).
VGP1 = *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie I* (Vol. 18).
VGP2 = *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie II* (Vol. 19).
VGP3 = *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie III* (Vol. 20).

A: = *Who thinks abstractly?* in Kaufmann W. *Hegel. Reinterpretation, Texts, and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday & Company, 1965), pp. 460–65.

Diff: = *The Difference between Fichte's and Schelling's System of Philosophy,* trans. H.S. Harris and W. Cerf (Albany: SUNY Press, 1977).

EL: = *The Encyclopaedia Logic,* trans. T.F. Geraets, W.A. Suchting, H.S. Harris, (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1991).

ETR: = *Early Theological Writings.* Trans. T.M. Knox (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948).

HP1-3: = *Lectures on the History of Philosophy.* 3 Vols. Trans. E.S. Haldane., F.H. Simpson (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995).

LT: = *Hegel: The Letters,* trans. C. Butler and C. Seiler (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984).

PN: = *Hegel's Philosophy of Nature,* ed. and trans. M.J. Petry. 3 Vols. (New York: Humanities Press, 1970).

PM: = *Hegel's Philosophy of Mind,* trans. W. Wallace, together with the Zuzatse in Baumann's text (1845) trans. by A. V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1971).

PR: = *Hegel's Philosophy of Right.* Trans. T. M. Knox (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1952).

PS: = *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit.* Trans. A.V. Miller (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977).

RSP: = *On the Relationship of Skepticism to Philosophy,* trans. H.S. Harris, in Giovanni G. di, Harris H.S. *Between Kant and Hegel: Texts in the Development of German Idealism* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1985).

SL: = *Hegel's Science of Logic,* trans. A.V. Miller (London: Allen & Unwin, 1969).

INTRODUCTION

The movement of German idealism culminates in the revelation of the reflective boundaries of theoretical knowledge. The history of the most important intellectual developments thereafter could be described, following a recent remark of Jürgen Habermas, as a history of the de-transcendentalization of the cognizing subject.[1] In this context, the epistemological interpretation proposed in this book must be specifically understood. Examining the problem of knowledge in the development of German idealism, it aims not at an epistemology of the Cartesian type, and even less at a formal logical analysis of knowledge which lacks the reflective element of the devices it employs as "the search for the immutable structures within which knowledge, life, and culture must be contained."[2] These "structures" do not only condition the process of knowledge, they are themselves conditioned. There is thus an unsurpassable circle in this process, a circle which German idealism brings to the surface and profoundly scrutinizes.

Therefore, the task is to reflectively account for the historical horizons in which cognition arises (being ultimately thereupon dependent), instead of searching for an ultimate Archimedean point for its deduction. Rather than searching for inexplicably transcendental concepts, this argument points to their determination from within a given *Lebenswelt*. It does not renounce but rather redefines objectivity, by seeing the subject as a coming-to-know-itself totality.[3]

---

1 J. Habermas, *Wahrheit und Rechtfertigung. Philosophische Aufsätze* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1999), p. 186.

2 R. Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1979), p. 162.

3 See in Habermas: "Dieses Subjekt wird als Ein und Alles, als Totalität gedacht, die "nichts außer sich haben kann." J. Habermas, *Wahrheit und Rechtfertigung,* p. 222.

Such an epistemology, by incorporating the reflective element, is different from traditional positivistic epistemology.

This is not to say that philosophical consideration of cognition has been made impossible, or that philosophy becomes solely and exclusively social theory.[4] For any engagement in social *theory* cannot but be intellectual in nature. It must rest on the categorical presuppositions that are revealed by reflection, and form the basis of cognition. At the same time, the presuppositions (the categorical background) are determined by what they determine (the given Life-world), so that the movement of knowledge is reciprocal: from the object to thought, and from thought to the object. *It is the former part of this movement that is so emphatically underlined by Hegel in his critique of Kant, and so thoughtlessly neglected in subsequent Hegelian scholarship.*

Resting on the powerfulness and finality of Hegel's system, the neglect of the methodological side of cognition in post-Hegelian research is not without reason. Foucault's famous aphorism in the *Archeology of Knowledge* will be repeated on a number of occasions in the present treatise: Hegel's grasp is so strong and all-encompassing that the great dialectician will be waiting at the end of the road of philosophy, no matter which road one follows. However, philosophy here is understood as *philosophia prima,* as the search of the primordial *αρχαί τού όντος*. In such case, "philosophy as a discipline capable of giving us the 'right method of seeking truth' depends upon finding some permanent neutral framework of all possible inquiry."[5] But this is exactly the boundary of cognition which German idealism reaches by showing that neutrality is unattainable and that the logical/epistemological inevitably merges with the metaphysical.

It is not my goal in this book to propose a radically different view on the above issue, and I am uncertain whether two centuries of philosophizing after Hegel were able to produce a substantially different paradigm that surpasses his all-encompassing grasp. What I will try to do is to distinguish the relative and historical from the metaphysical/ontological, which is absolute and ahistorical. On the essential aspect, the dialectic of rationality, I argue with Hegel.

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4 Cf. in Habermas: "Die radikale Erkenntniskritik nur als Gesellschaftstheorie möglich ist." Habermas, *Erkenntnis und Interesse* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1968), p. 9.

5 R. Rorty, *op. cit.*, p. 211.

But instead of trying to move *beyond* Hegel, I rather attempt to assess the dialectic of rationality *after* Hegel.

The development of German idealism has shown that the pursuit of unqualified cognitive certainty leads to metaphysics. Cognitive claims must rest on some rules, which either have to be scrutinized and put in the context of their historical development and relativized, or remain unexamined and postulated as metaphysical principles. This book follows the first path. It makes no demand for unconditional knowledge or any metaphysical or ontological claims. To the contrary, the terms "metaphysics" and "ontology" will be used interchangeably in the proposed investigation. Whether knowledge is knowledge of external reality, God, metaphysical principles, or any other *final* piece of truth makes no difference for my discussion, for the claim of a *final* piece of truth would revive the traditional philosophical pursuit. In other words, I argue that the epistemological (cognitive) is neither neutral nor ahistorical (along with Hegel) nor oriented toward ultimate answers *a la philosophie traditionnelle* (contra Hegel).[6] If the latter were the case, then the circle would repeat itself, and Hegel would indeed be waiting at the end of the road of philosophy. Such is the way in which the metaphysical will be distinguished from the epistemological (cognitive) in the present work.

Admitting the dead-end of traditional epistemology, philosophy then reorients itself toward thinking *from within* its given historical horizon. Habermas has called this movement "post-metaphysical thinking." Endorsing such a view, I will try to avoid relapsing into sociopolitical considerations, as post-Hegelian and Marxist scholarship has done. For my goal is to scrutinize the *presuppositions* of engagement in these considerations from a historical angle.

---

6 The following will be repeatedly and extensively argued in this work: Although Hegel is known for emphatically and innovatively reconsidering the *path* of philosophy by relating the absolute to its otherness (respectively, God to the world, infinity to finitude, etc), he does not reconsider the traditional *goal* of philosophy, the pursuit of some final piece of truth. It is useful to have in mind that it is Schelling who first revived metaphysics, despite Kant's devastating criticism, and that even Fichte's late writings have a distinct theosophical character. The panlogistic Hegel criticizes the *method* utilized by Schelling, but *not the project itself.*

While philosophy traditionally has been associated with metaphysics and unconditionally valid answers to the problems which it addresses, post-metaphysical philosophy must redefine itself. Is it a social theory? Is it a mere cultural assessment? My answer to these questions is positive with respect to the traditional philosophical endeavors, the pursuit of unqualified cognition, and the explanation of the world in its final *αρχαί*. Yet, this response is not meant to descend into the relativism that, for instance, Rorty seems to suggest. Philosophy interprets praxis and history, and can do so rigorously and effectively. Such understanding makes philosophical investigation relevant to any other field of human inquiry, be it social or natural science. The task of philosophy is reflection or meta-reflection on the findings of science, yet the meta-reflective and the metaphysical *are not necessarily one and the same*. Thus, philosophy in the current treatise will be viewed as a metalogical withdrawal, a generalization of the historical moment which (generalization) is relativistic with respect to the endeavors of traditional First Philosophy, and still certain in its findings from within the historical context. In sum, the proposed work is underlined by a skepticism toward the possibility of obtaining unconditional "truths" along with the conviction of the certainty that historical praxis unveils.

This could be called dialectical phenomenology, but it takes place mostly in the context of Hegel's assault against transcendentalism. The notion of phenomenology as it is advanced, for instance, by Husserl does not account for the internal unity of knowledge and the manifold. Neither does this approach account for the internally dialectical nature of knowledge, its historical horizon, or, most importantly, its contradictions. Hegel has made these issues the center of his philosophy. At the same time, it must be noted that there is a great difference between being as it historically unfolds, and being as it is in-itself. Hegel is not interested in this difference. As it will be argued in this book, Hegel is able to overcome the Kantian emphasis on this issue solely on the basis of identification of being and thought. However, for the post-metaphysical position that I will be defending, Kant's thing-in-itself is paramount and unsurpassable.

Metaphysical philosophy is of a bygone dimension. True, no one forbids that the actualization of the propensity of reason toward "completeness of its conclusions" (in Kant's expression), is applied in metaphysical and ontological explorations in exercising the *θαυμάζειν* which Aristotle had identified with the start of

philosophy. Philosophy in this case is not allied with *επιστήμη,* but rather presents itself as a *μύθος*. It is the alliance with science that makes the claims of philosophy valid, yet this validity does not and cannot take on an ultimate, supra-historical authority.

Having set my presuppositions, I will now sketch the structure of this book. One of the underlying motives of my investigation is to figure out "what is living and what is dead" in the philosophical movement that culminates in Hegel. Philosophy, in Hegel's famous words, is "its era grasped in thought." In the context of the present work, this idea points to Hegel's indebtedness to the philosophical discussion of his time. Philosophical discourse has a dialogical nature, common roots, and common origins, and therefore can be traced as an interrelated synthesis of the evolution of the human spirit, in its onto- and phylogenesis. This is how the evolution of German idealism will be examined in the proposed investigation. Such treatment does not exclude but includes the independence of each particular project.[7]

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7 Cf. R.-P. Horstmann "The Early Philosophy of Fichte and Schelling," in K. Ameriks, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to German Idealism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 117–140. Horstmann writes: "It is seriously misleading, however, to look at the various philosophical theories presented by these German idealists in this way. There is no 'from … to …' if by this is meant some kind of organic process of complementation. Rather, each of the German idealists pursued a very individual project that was guided by very special assumptions concerning what philosophy is all about" (p. 118). Horstmann's concerns are understandable. Philosophical discussion is richer than what later reconstructions show by not taking into consideration the particular concerns and projects of each of the individual thinkers involved. However, the stress of difference over unity is one-sided. If there was dialogue, commonly shared problems, and discussion (Horstmann admits all that), there must be some rationally perceived logical sequence in the development of the discourse that can be reconstructed. Not accidentally, in this article Horstmann has no other way to proceed than to discuss Fichte and Schelling in direct relationship to Kant. Moreover, that Horstmann demonstrates such "from … to" configurations in his major work represents, in my opinion, one of the most interesting interpretations of German idealism. See R.-P. Horstmann, *Die Grenzen der Vernunft. Eine Untersuchung zu Zielen und Motiven des Deutschen Idealismus* (Frankfurt am Main: Alton Hein, 1991).

The issue of post-metaphysical philosophy is directly, yet ambiguously, put forth by Kant. In the first chapter, I examine a number of Kantian dichotomies which in a very definite sense predestine the unfolding of the discourse in German idealism. First of all, Kant is an epistemological optimist and simultaneously an ontological-metaphysical skeptic. He decisively holds both positions, without realizing that unqualified epistemic and logical claims must eventually account for their metaphysical background, the boundary of their justification. When it comes to such an account, Kant simply arrays the transcendental self and the categories, yet is unable to offer an explanation of their derivation, of the correspondence between the categories and intuitions, as well as of the logic of his transcendental deduction. And from there, the initial dichotomy between epistemological optimism and metaphysical skepticism reappears as a series of further dichotomies, which are discussed in the chapter: those between the transcendental and the empirical, between the thing-in-itself and cognitive certainty, between the ontological and the logical, and between the logical and the dialectical.

The second chapter examines the radical transformation of Kantian philosophy by Fichte and Schelling. When Fichte enters the discussion, Kant is already being torn apart by Jacobi and the skeptics. Though Fichte is a convinced Kantian and inherits the dilemmas of dualism, he finds a way to advance the claim of certainty by diminishing the role of the thing-in-itself and by deriving all knowledge from a single principle. By the same token, Fichte opens the way to modern dialectic. I will explicitly argue that Fichte's contribution to the development of the dialectical discourse is groundbreaking, that the phenomenological *démarche* of consciousness and the dialectic of the categories is already unveiled (although in an embryonic form) in Fichte's writings well before Hegel.[8] Yet Fichte's methodological rupture concerning the issue

8 Paul Franks recently argued that there are two "methods" in the post-Kantian discussion, that of construction (which he ascribes to Fichte) and that of dialectic (employed by Schelling and Hegel). See Franks, P., All or *Nothing: Systematicity, Transcendental Arguments and Skepticism in German Idealism* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2005),

of logic has a dramatic payoff: his *epistemological* monism constitutes a profound advance over Kant;[9] that said, Fichte will still have to account for the *foundations* of the new logic itself. However, instead of explaining the initial principle of the *Wissenschaftslehre,* he simply postulates it as "fact of empirical consciousness." His epistemological monism thereby remains captive to, and is effectively an amplification of, the same *ontological* dualism which entangled Kant. In this context, Fichte's continued demand for unqualified certainty only prepares the way to the identification of the epistemological and the ontological/metaphysical in Schelling and Hegel.

The second part of the second chapter is devoted to Schelling. Schelling begins as Fichte's disciple, yet by discerning Fichte's dichotomy, he comes to realize for the first time that *unqualified epistemic claims must be metaphysically grounded.* The signs of the later split between the two thinkers are evident in Schelling's earliest works. The influence of the Romantics, Jacobi, Spinoza, and even Plato (as the latest research suggests) is decisive. Eventually, in order to overcome Fichte's dualism, Schelling finds refuge in the philosophy of nature and "retrieves the Cusan notion of the *coincidentia oppositorum,* a move that would form the basis of his reply to the Kantian interdiction against pursuing theoretical knowledge beyond the realm of the finite."[10] Schelling's step also amounts to the restoration of pre-Kantian metaphysics, a particularity which is overtly acknowledged by the philosopher in the

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Ch. 6. It remains unclear why the one is opposed to the other, why Fichte's position is not dialectical, why Fichte is essentially juxtaposed to Schelling and Hegel, etc. Construction, even if this is really Fichte's method, is definitely a dialectical process. On the other hand, dialectical exposition is also a construction.

9 I think that Franks is right when he writes that "Fichte's account is in better shape than Kant's because of Fichte's Holistic Monism" (Franks, *All or Nothing,* p. 364). But Fichte's monism is only *epistemological,* and sets aside the relation between epistemology and metaphysics. However, in the subsequent discussion Schelling will first realize that epistemological claims cannot be upheld unconditionally unless they rest on metaphysical premises.

10 P. Redding, *Hegel's Hermeneutics* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1996), pp. 57–8.

works that follow the 1800 *System of Transcendental Idealism.*[11] At the same time, Schelling's methodological contribution is not regressive. To the contrary, it spreads the dialectic into the objective realm and universalizes it. To be sure, this claim is hinted at rather than actually articulated by the philosopher himself. His awe in front of the revelation of the boundary between the logical and the metaphysical/religious confines him, and instead of the elaboration of dialectic, it gradually leads him to irrationalism.

I will parenthetically note here that Schelling's intellectual progression coincides with Fichte's progression in the late 1790s, and that Hegel's progression coincides with Schelling's progression in the early 1800s. It is, therefore, an open question "who exercises influence on whom" among the three post-Kantian philosophical giants. It is a fact that a number of ideas of Fichte's versions of the *Wissenschaftslehre* after 1797 can be found already in Schelling's earlier essays. Similarly, several commentators argue that Hegel's influence on Schelling was significant early on and had a decisive impact on Schelling's break with Fichte, or the reverse: that Hegel's advances were largely borrowed from and resting on Schelling's ideas. These questions will be only partially dealt with in the present study.

Schelling's revival of nature, the universal dialectic, and the resurrection of metaphysics are key notions for understanding the framework of the methodological pursuits of Hegel. The great dialectician is the object of the third and fourth chapters of this book. In chapter 3, I start by arguing that Hegel is from the very beginning a metaphysical philosopher (§1), and as such

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11 According to Franks, Schelling's difference with Fichte is that Schelling sees the absolute as the *culmination* of the system, not its beginning (see Franks P., *All or Nothing,* pp. 141, 329). First, it must be noted that Fichte, at least until the early 1800s, is not interested in *the* absolute but in absolute (i.e., unqualified) cognition. And Schelling, who joins epistemology and metaphysics, maintains that the absolute (as absolute identity) can be grasped intuitively from the very start (like "a shot from a pistol," as Hegel writes with irony in the *Phenomenology*). In my view, it is only Hegel who will see the absolute as the *culmination* of the system.

he decisively attempts to penetrate what he believes to be the nature of the absolute. The contrast with Kant is striking. At the same time, Hegel claims to have brought an end to transcendentalism. I examine this claim in detail (§2) with regard to Hegel's *Phenomenology,* and charge Hegel with ambiguous intentions. While demonstrating the specificity of the rational, Hegel surrenders the real. He is not looking for the rationality of the real, but the reality of the rational; and when the rational is found in the real (and the historical), it is thus not enough to satisfy his objectives. These objectives are metaphysical and crucial for his phenomenological strategy. I am deeply critical of Hegel's claim of absolute knowing, and knowledge of the absolute. Hegel argues for absolute knowing (*absolutes Wissen*) even when he presents it as necessarily connected to, and expressed exclusively through, relative knowing. My criticism will touch the "edges" of his system, the relation of mind to experience, his attack on transcendentalism, and his expansion of his system toward absolute knowing. The first two of Hegel's claims are unfinished; the third is impossible.

Despite Hegel's ambiguous appeal to reality, his insights on the dialectical nature, social-historical mediation, and intersubjective character of cognition are later confirmed in scientific research. In order to make this claim, I will invoke the findings of modern genetic epistemology and interpret the ideal in an "upward" trajectory as a modus of the real (§3). This will not bring me back to Spinozism, for I will set aside metaphysical claims and, in Chapter 4, come to construe the *Science of Logic* as a genetic theory of systematic knowledge and as circular epistemology (§1). The Hegelian theory of knowledge is primarily, although not exclusively, a categorical theory. This is suggested, for example, by Klaus Hartmann's influential interpretation.[12] However, in my elucidation I will separate the categorical from

12 K. Hartmann, "Hegel: A Non-Metaphysical View," in A. MacIntyre, ed., *Hegel: A Collection of Critical Essays* (New York: Anchor Books, 1972), pp. 101–124; Hartmann K., ed., *Die Ontologische Option: Studien zu Hegels Propädeutik, Schellings Hegel-Kritik, und Hegels Phänomenologie des Geistes* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1976), part I.

the ontological-metaphysical, whereas Hartmann does not. In fact, he vaguely defines category as "the claim that being matches what thought thinks of it." Within such an interpretation, not only does the ground of appearance of the category remain unclear, so does the extent of its justification. One should exercise similar caution toward the "ontology of social being" that Lukács advocates. It seems to me that Lukács is right on target when talking about *social* ontology. However, the ontological as *λόγος περί του όντος*, necessarily conveys a finality in the depiction of being in its ultimate and unsurpassable principles. Rather, in fact, any possible integration of knowledge of reality in a totality amounts to its formulation from within the given historical moment and within the given rationality, by no means speaking of any final description. If what Lukács advocates is an ontology of *social* being, then its relativism is evident and the thing-in-itself remains unshakable.

My interpretation of the *Logic* is partly against the grain of Hegel's intentions. Hegel claims that the *Logic* "describes the situation in the Godhead before the creation of nature." At the same time, his argument advances the demand of the dispersal of the ideal in the real. The real then must be seen not as being in its ultimate structure, but the object of scientific knowledge as it is logically portrayed in thought. The dialectical portrayal, Hegel's epistemology, demands that thought is intimately connected with its object which must be circularly grasped as praxis, and in terms of its hitherto historical evolution. Historicism, praxis, circularity, and systematicity are some of the conditions of the dialectical narrative, which results in the portrayal of an inwardly articulated totality. First, the totality which Hegel champions must be seen as existing in an evolutionary trajectory. Second, totality can be properly portrayed only in its maturity *and* only after thought has reached its own maturity for such a portrayal. Respectively, dialectical presentation becomes possible only after cognition sublates the exoteric intellectual (*verständlich*) portrayal by a rational (*vernünftig*) portrayal. Once such a level is reached, the *logical* categorical portrayal of the scientific object can unveil contradiction as an essential characteristic of that object. It is astounding how much the issue of contradiction

has been neglected,[13] and how much the latest Hegelian scholarship has capitulated in the face of advancements of formal logic, diminishing Hegel's assault on the law of identity. The argument here is certainly not unilaterally against formal logic, but is drives home the idea that was carried along in the development of German idealism: that formal logic has no say in *philosophical* cognition. Rather than separating the copula as identity and as predication, separating form and content, being and becoming, the Hegelian argument aims at *uniting* them in a meta-consideration that is carried out by the faculty of reason and its device, the dialectic or dialectical logic. Reason focuses on the inner source of movement and the development of its object, which reason portrays as being in an evolutionary trajectory. I will conclude my discussion (§2) by addressing the topic of an evolving dialectical totality of reflective scientific reason. It pertains to any scientific inquiry and to the possibility of a universal science as accomplishing the Hegelian scheme of "circle of circles."

A few words need to be said about my *Auseinandersetzung* with existing research on German idealism. Marxists and Neokantians will be criticized for their inflationary understanding of the thing-in-itself, the latest Fichte research for defending Fichte's treatment of the thing-in-itself, and Hegelian research for bypassing the importance of the notion of contradiction, for diminishing the metaphysical and religious dimension of Hegel's thought, and for denying the possibility of a dialectical understanding of the so-called positive sciences.

The international bibliography on German idealism is vast, especially if one includes the works on each particular author. It seems impossible even to write a commentary on the commentaries. One has to rely on the mind's transcendental potential – and

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13 For a recent exception with emphasis on practical philosophy see S. Hahn, *Contradiction in Motion: Hegel's Organic Concept of Life and Value* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007). See also the correlation of Hegel's position with recent analytic philosophy in P. Redding, *Analytic Philosophy and the Return of Hegelian Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), esp. Ch. 7.

remember that Newton did not have to consider every falling apple before realizing his theory of gravitation.

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No intellectual labor can evolve entirely independently. As this book had been simmering for several years, I am indebted to numerous people for the scholarly influence either through the direct debates we had at various meetings and conferences or through indirect (but permanent) debates I had with them through their writings. It is impossible to list them all here. I am also grateful to numerous people for their help in carrying the project out: to Richard J. Bernstein for his patience to advise me about this project from its very inception; to Axel Honneth, Georg Mohr, and Hans Jörg Sandkühler for hosting me at the Universities of Frankfurt and Bremen in 2001–02, during which time an important part my research was carried out; to Monika Ekiert, Carol Porr, and Michael Jonik for editing the manuscript; to Springer's two anonymous reviewers for their detailed reading of the manuscript and astonishingly positive feedback; to Springer's editors for their patience to work with me in order to bring the manuscript to a finished form. Above all, I am indebted to Tom Rockmore for his overall intellectual encouragement, for believing in me even at times when I stopped believing in myself. Tom is not only a profound scholar and an astonishing erudite, he is also as helpful and supportive as one can be. Needless to mention, the many weaknesses of this work are entirely the author's responsibility.

CHAPTER ONE

EPISTEMOLOGY OR METAPHYSICS? THE KANTIAN BACKGROUND

I. Scientific Metaphysics?

In all spheres of human inquiry, few fields are more admired and at the same time more challenged than philosophy. From the time of its inception, this so-called love of wisdom has sought the ultimate answers in any sphere of knowledge, from the key principles of the universe to the innermost secrets of the human soul. The ambitious endeavors of philosophy connote a certain arrogance, which has been revealed at an ever-increasing degree along with the evolution of history and the differentiation of human knowledge. The gradual accumulation of knowledge has led particular fields to be emancipated from philosophy's embrace. This emancipation then created an analogously increasing mistrust toward philosophy, and the feeling that – not only is each particular field of knowledge self-sufficient – but that philosophy itself is characterized by vanity, futility, and worthlessness. From being the *quintessence* of human knowledge, philosophy gradually became a phantasmagoria, a pale and unconvincing enterprise contrasting sharply with the precision and apodictic nature of other sciences. According to this view, even if the human spirit is characterized by wonder and an urge for the unreachable, and if this urge is expressed in the philosophical gaze toward the unconditioned, philosophy (which has survived the increasing attacks against it) needs to be separated from other fields of knowledge. Unlike philosophy, these other fields can be traced rigorously and efficiently.

However, philosophers would hardly accept such a charge against them. Hence, dating back to Francis Bacon, Descartes, and many others, there were numerous attempts to make philosophy scientific, and philosophical systems to an ever-increasing degree started imitating the procedural characteristics of modern science. Kant was not to avoid this discourse. His system represents one of the greatest attempts to return philosophy to a place of respect

and trustworthiness that the emergence of modern science had taken away. Of course, Kant was neither the first nor the last to attempt this restoration. Such an ambition is characteristic of much of contemporary philosophical discourse.

Kant begins his first *Critique* with the acknowledgment that philosophy (which, he traditionally identifies with metaphysics) is under serious challenge for not being able to ground its claims effectively. "Time was when metaphysics was entitled the Queen of all sciences; and if the will be taken for the deed, the preeminent importance of her accepted tasks gives her every right to this title of honor" (CPR, AVII). This is no longer the case, and the doubt about the effectiveness and rigorousness of philosophical claims is not without grounds. It is philosophy itself that is to blame for such a doubt, for it has been "dogmatic" and has proceeded "without any previous examination of the capacity or incapacity of reason for so great an undertaking" (CPR, B7/A3). The dominance of dogmatism also made previous philosophy "despotic" (CPR, AX). Its claims were imposed rather than critically examined and properly substantiated. The quandary is that, unlike other fields of knowledge, "metaphysics ... has not yet had the good fortune to enter upon the secure path of a science" (CPR, B XIV). If metaphysics could enter such a path, it would again become the queen of human inquiries. It is, therefore, philosophical (self)criticism that can restore the credibility of philosophy in a way that is indeed superior to that of other sciences. Such is Kant's starting point. He wants to examine whether the sought substantiation of philosophical claims is achievable, and to offer an answer to the question as to whether something like metaphysics is possible at all (PFM, A4, A32, A38; TP2, 53, 69, 70). In sum, along with accepting the aforesaid criticism against philosophy, Kant positions himself optimistically.

In undertaking another attempt to restore philosophy to its throne, Kant is passionately convinced of his certitude. Comparing science to metaphysics, he constantly reiterates his diagnosis: the phrase that metaphysics has not yet entered the "secure path of science" is repeated in the beginning of the first *Critique* on numerous occasions (CPR, BXIX, XXIV, XXX, XXXVII, etc.), and all other post-critical works of the philosopher are also filled with such claims. Therefore, Kant not only pursues

for the science of reason (i.e., philosophy) a "sovereign role" in relation to science,[1] but he also pursues a *scientific* status for philosophy. He wants a science that stems from philosophy, *scientific philosophy*, not a philosophy that is opposed to science. As he puts it, "the critique of reason, in the end, necessarily leads to scientific knowledge" (CPR, B22). Claiming to have found the way to obtain proper, reliable, and positive knowledge, Kant promises to "guard against all errors" (CPR, AXII) and confidently names his transcendental philosophy "the idea of *a pure Science*" (CPR, B27).

How then can metaphysics be possible? Ontologically, Kant shifts philosophy in the direction of the subject, and attempts to unveil the *a priori* content of human reason. Reliance on experience is always limited and does not suffice to satisfy the quest of metaphysics, for this quest has to do with the infinite and the beyond. What one needs is to shift the way of investigation. One needs to examine the possibility of *a priori* cognition (CPR, BXX).

Kant's turn to *a priori* cognition along with the introduction of the thing-in-itself settles the ontological question. There remains the methodological question, which is equally important for my discussion. Although the typical methodological procedure (e.g., the geometrical method of Descartes, the inductive-mathematical method of Newton, etc.) is not what Kant employs, the restoration of philosophy to its throne as the queen of sciences is to be fulfilled in the standard scientific sense of logical strictness, apodictic nature, and, above all, systemicity. Completeness, exhaustiveness, certainty, and clarity (*Vollständigkeit, Ausführlichkeit, Gewißheit, Deutlichkeit* – CPR, A XIV-XVI) are some of the characteristics upon which proper philosophical cognition should be grounded. Philosophy has to become science in *all* its constitutive aspects. "Metaphysics must be a science not only as a whole but also in all its parts, otherwise it is nothing at all" (PFM, A200; TP2, 159).

Kant's approach conveys a rather imitative attitude toward other sciences. Indicative of such an attitude is also the fact that the

1 J. Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests,* trans. J.J. Shapiro (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), p. 3.

examples of strict apodictic fields of inquiry Kant makes use of are Mathematics and Theoretical Physics.[2] The latter two, having followed the secure path of science, are "the two sciences in which theoretical knowledge is determined *a priori*" (CPR, BX). From the outset it must be mentioned that this imitation concerns the method rather than the tasks. Only under this condition do pure physics and pure mathematics serve as examples for Kant's venture. The propositions of these sciences are synthetic rather than analytic; they *are* known *a priori* and they demonstrate the existence of an *a priori* structure of intuition. The question is *how* to demonstrate such structure in philosophy and thus to elevate philosophy to the rank of strict and apodictic science. Once this is accomplished, then a properly understood metaphysics will remunerate physics and mathematics by construing their foundations. In the language of the first *Critique*, philosophy will be able to explain how pure mathematics is possible and how pure natural science is possible.

However, the above does not answer the question of the chasm between the objectives of metaphysics and those of other sciences. Although Kant acknowledges this disparity, his assertive tone leads to the emergence of a fundamentally important ambiguity. On the one hand, he wants to be scientific, apodictic, and raise philosophy to the stature of other sciences. On the other hand, his critique is still oriented toward solving *metaphysical questions*. Central inquiries of the first *Critique*, "the unavoidable tasks of pure reason" (CPR, B, 7) are God, freedom and immortality. The possibility of any kind of scientific treatment of these questions (especially God and immortality) seems highly problematic. Kant himself lets them open to thought, but not to knowledge. He examines metaphysics only according to "how it is actually given in the natural disposition of human reason," not as a summary of the governing principles of the world in itself. Thus, Kant admits that he studies this discipline "according to its subjective possibility" (PFM, A183; TP2, 150). He maintains that the critique of the principles of reason is the only way to make science out of metaphysics and that "through other ways and by other means it is impossible" (PFM, A189; TP2, 154). At

2 See also J. Habermas, *op. cit.,* pp. 14–5.

the same time, he maintains that he presents a scientific treatment of these questions and a final response to them.

Furthermore, not only does Kant deny the possibility of the old, now moribund, metaphysics – thus reducing metaphysics to the *logical* investigation of concepts it *a priori* involves (in that sense, Hegel will later note that it is Kant who first reduced metaphysics to logic) – he also reintroduces a new understanding of philosophy as *metaphysics*.[3] In Kant's own definition, "pure rational cognition from mere *concepts* is called philosophy or metaphysics" (MA, AVII; TP2, 185). In the last pages of the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant even proposes a plan for a rebirth of metaphysics[4] that is made up of four quite traditional parts: ontology, natural philosophy (physiology), cosmology, and theology. It could be said that the philosopher sacrifices traditional *ουτολογία*, the ultimate explanation of being, in order to save metaphysics (if by the latter one understands the search for some initial *αρχαί*)[5] by locating the subject matter of metaphysics not in the object but inside the mind of the subjective agent.

The echoes of Kant's twofold position are reflected in current debates as well. The widely spread twentieth century rejection of metaphysics[6] can be seen as a confirmation of the tendency

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3 See Robert Pippin's discussion of the epistemological and metaphysical form in Kant's arguments in his, *Kant's Theory of Form* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982), p. 17ff.

4 Ötfried Höffe has successfully termed Kant's doctrine "Post-metaphysical Metaphysics." See Ö. Höffe, *Kants Kritik der reinen Vernunft* (München: C.H. Beck, 2003), part IV.

5 I must once again caution about the treatment of these terms. As I have already stated, I treat their difference as one of degree, not of kind. The use of these terms is different in various authors and schools. The bibliography on German idealism is not unambiguous either. R. Kroner, for instance, claims that *philosophia transcendentalis* is the original translation of *ουτολογία*. See R. Kroner *Von Kant bis Hegel,* 1. Bd. (Tübingen: Mohr, 1921), p. 55.

6 See, for example, A. Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic* (New York: Dove, 1946), pp. 33–45. Beyond demonstrating the proximity on the issue of metaphysics, it must be clear that my argument is not aimed at identifying Kant's transcendentalism with any form of Neopositivism.

that lead to Kant's Copernican turn. There is, however, the other side of the coin. Numerous commentators claim that what Kant presents is a scientific metaphysics, for instance, a "metaphysics of experience." Such a claim is correct on its own merits. One may call the Kantian analysis of the transcendental nature of our cognitive abilities a metaphysical one: the categories of the understanding, by being established as eternal satellites of any cognitive act, make up answers to metaphysical-ontological questions. Moreover, despite Kant's negative answers to the issues of traditional metaphysics in his Transcendental Dialectic, he does nothing but offer negative *response* to these issues, and thus, a metaphysical *thesis*. Kant's position is therefore a skeptical or agnostic *position*.

The above argument can be sharpened if one considers another dimension of Kant's twofoldness, namely the twofoldness between his ontological skepticism and his epistemological forcefulness. He rejects the possibility of unconditioned knowledge of the object, the thing-in-itself. With caution and humility, he claims that "about the nature of supersensible objects, God, our own ability of freedom we can … know nothing whatsoever" (WP, A110; TP2, 385). In that sense, the Kantian system represents an appealing philosophical modesty.[7] This is, however, only half of Kant's account. For not only does he sanction (and offer) unconditioned knowledge of the subject, he also assumes his investigation to be completed in a positive, epistemologically solid, and conclusive way.[8] In that sense, he is "no less an objectivist and foundationalist than the empiricists and the rationalists he was criticizing. Kant does not question the need for an ahistorical

7 This aspect is especially stressed in K. Ameriks, *Kant and the Fate of Autonomy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), esp. 37–77. Kant's system is ontologically modest, but epistemologically arrogant. Ameriks ascribes this latter strive to Reinhold's (mis)appropriation of Kant, and explains the ambitiousness of the systems of Fichte, Schelling and Hegel through Reinhold's interpretation.

8 Ameriks calls the demand for the unconditioned "the poison of Kant's critique." See Ameriks, K., *Kant and the Historical Turn: Philosophy as Critical Interpretation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2006), p. 149.

permanent matrix or categorical scheme for grounding knowledge; he insists upon it more rigorously than many of his predecessors."[9]

If we now position the above concerns in the development of German idealism, we can conclude the following: Kant's epistemological assertiveness about the possibility of a metaphysical science eventually outshines his skeptical equilibrium and predestines the unfolding of the immediate post-Kantian discourse. For the other representatives of German idealism, the heights and respect that philosophy gained after Kant overshadow Kant's overall skeptical position. The possibility of scientific metaphysics gradually becomes actualized, and metaphysics becomes a science with the same Kantian epistemological insistence.

Finally, Kant's conclusions were not overshadowed on the basis of epistemological and metaphysical certainty alone. They became overshadowed in a specific way, that of philosophical *idealism*. The flow of the post-Kantian discourse indexes to another twofoldness in Kantian philosophy. Kant's position was based on a specific analysis defined by his "Copernican Revolution": the investigation of the subject and its activity, rather than the object.[10] I will now proceed to examine this issue and, in so doing, challenge the extent of Kant's appeal to experience as a source of cognition. My intention is not to argue against the notion of the transcendental *per se*. The matter of contention rather is the fact that Kant centers his discussion on the transcendental *at the expense* of the immanent.

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9 R.J. Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism: Science, Hermeneutics and Praxis* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1983), p. 10.

10 Burkhard Tuschling has convincingly argued that even Kant himself tended to sublate his own system of transcendental idealism with speculative idealism in his *Opus Postumum*. See B. Tuschling, "Übergang: Von der Revision zur Revolutionierung und Selbst-Aufhebung des Systems des transzendentalen Idealismus in Kant's *Opus Posthumum,*" in H.F. Fulda, and J. Stolzenberg, eds., *Architektonik und System in der Philosophie Kants* (Hamburg: Meiner, 2001), pp. 129–170.

II. Transcendentalism Versus Realism?

The founder of German idealism begins his *Critique of Pure Reason* with the famous statement that "there can be no doubt that all our knowledge begins with experience ... But though our knowledge begins with experience, it does not follow that it all arises from experience" (CPR, B1). While theoretically upholding the twofold nature of cognition, in practice Kant sets aside the role of the manifold. As the latter has only subordinated role, Kant proceeds to investigate human reason in its "purity" and to stress the subjectively imposed form[11] of knowledge as opposed to the source and content of knowledge. Even time and space, two elements that have always been associated with the world as such, are now set aside by Kant, reduced to the role of mere conditions of cognition. Therefore, the question becomes "whether there is any knowledge that is independent of experience and even of all impressions of the senses" (CPR, B2, B4, etc) or, in Kant's specific terminology, "how are synthetic judgments possible a *priori?*" (CPR, B19). As we know, Kant answers this question in the positive. In addition to the *a priori* forms of intuition, he aims at demonstrating the existence of *a priori* concepts, the categories of the understanding. Kant does not focus on the object and its particularities, or the need to describe it as accurately as possible, but proposes the opposite route: to investigate the subject of cognition itself, its structure and legitimacy, whether *the subject and not the object* ultimately determines cognition. This is what the famous "Copernican revolution in philosophy" amounts to (CPR, BXVI-XVII).

Kant is certain that the way to accomplish his objectives is by examining the potential and content of "pure" reason *a priori*, that is, without any empirical admixture. Thus, he proceeds to

11 For an extensive and balanced treatment of the problems that Kant's shift raises, see R. Pippin's abovementioned *Kant's Theory of Form*. Pippin steers a middle course between the so-called "phenomenalist interpretation" (J. Findlay, N.K. Smith, etc.) and the transcendental realist approach (G. Prauss, H. Allison, etc), despite claiming to be closer to the latter.

investigate what this faculty produces "entirely out of itself" (CPR, AXX), that is, by bracketing all its applications and inferring some universally applicable principles that are obligatory for thought in general, "whether it be *a priori* or empirical, whatever be its origin or object, and whatever hindrances accidental or naturally it may encounter in our minds." (CPR, BIX).

In Kant's system, the object retains only its nominal use: it simply *is*. The philosopher explicitly underlines the transcendental nature of his enterprise. On the one hand, concepts that Kant argues for are *intended* to be concepts of possible experience only: "the categories, as yielding knowledge of *things*, have no kind of application, save only in regard to things which may be objects of possible experience" (CPR, B147-8). On the other hand, Kant is clear about their *independence* from experience. Only in passim does he deal with their origin. A number of questions are recorded here. Are transcendental concepts *first* established and only *then* applied to experience? Subsequently, *how* are those concepts established? How does a human individual or humanity as a whole come to acquire the ability of idealization, the formation of those ideal (transcendental) concepts that mediate the approach to experience, and generate knowledge by themselves? *Why* do objects conform to our representations (or vice versa)? While Kant admits that "empirical laws can by no means derive their origin from pure understanding," he immediately adds that "all empirical laws are only particular determinations for the pure laws of understanding" (CPR, A127-8). He assumes that there is a certain harmony between the two which is equally underscored in both the first and third *Critiques*. However, such harmony is only postulated. Kant has surprisingly very little to say about it.

> This peculiarity of our understanding, that it can produce *a priori* unity of apperception solely by means of the categories, and only by such and so many, is as little capable of further explanation as why we have just these and no other functions of judgment, or why space and time are the only form of our intuition (CPR, B145-6).

Sensitivity and understanding are "two stems of human knowledge ... which perhaps spring from a common, but to us unknown, root" (CPR, B29). The weight of this problem, even

in contemporary epistemological discussions,[12] can hardly be underestimated. Kant, in no position to elaborate on the "root" of cognition, remains captive to dualism: the transcendental concepts are posited on the one end of cognition, and the manifold (to which the concepts are applied) is posited on the other end. Combined with the traditional orientation of philosophy toward once and for all given truths, Kant's dualism strengthens his skepticism and, at the same time, is strengthened by it.

While it is granted that "all our knowledge starts with the senses, proceeds from there to understanding, and ends with reason," (CPR, A298/B355) what is missing from Kant's argument is the concrete demonstration of the unity between transcendental concept and the manifold.[13] This problem pertains to the origin and nature of intelligence and, given the advances of corresponding sciences since Darwin, can at the present time be addressed without any appeal to metaphysics. Just a few centuries ago, the situation was quite different. Not only was science unable to explain the cultural and historical origins of thought, it was content to rely on an available, ready-made response, namely that the human mind is the result of divine involvement and creationism. Such a response satisfied various schools of thought throughout the history of philosophy. The founder of German idealism did not exactly follow such a path (although he famously tried to limit reason in order to make room for faith). Nevertheless, it is quite conceivable that he was satisfied with the *mere statement* that knowledge begins with experience.

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12 In "Naturalized Epistemology," Quine almost verbatim reproduces Kant's quandary: "We may not be able to explain why we arrive at theories which make successful predictions, but we do arrive at such theories." See W. Quine, *Ontological Relativity and Other Essays* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), p. 79.

13 William Werkmeister has convincingly argued that Kant was aware of the problem and attempted to abridge the gap between concept and intuition in the *Opus Postumum*. See William H. Werkmeister, *Kant: the Architectonic and Development of his Philosophy* (La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 1980).

In support of Kant, one might argue that "the *a priori* forms themselves are not innate but have their history."[14] Even if one grants that Kantian philosophy would possibly accept such treatment, nowhere does Kant himself demonstrate that he treats the categories of knowledge from a historical standpoint. Kant rightfully holds that the categories cannot themselves be defined without falling into a circle, for a judgment about them already presupposes them (CPR, A245/B302). Historicity, circularity, and relativism would be plausible ways of responding to the problem. Yet this is surely not Kant's position. Quite the reverse happens within his system, in which *a priori* structures seem innate and unchangeable. To be sure, this will be a major point of assault against Kant in the development of German idealism.[15]

It is nowadays trivial to claim that cognition is historically limited. Moreover, the historically defined level of knowledge inevitably shapes the capabilities of reflection, and its particularities are unconsciously dragged into the philosophical inquiry. Thus, in the *Critique of Judgment*, Kant sharply denies what he calls "hylozoism" (CJ, A320/B324ff) and maintains that it is the subject that ascribes dynamism to the object. Nature is governed by "mechanical" laws that are unable to explain the possibility of the organic (see also, B338, A334). Kant expresses similar thoughts in the *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science*, where he claims that "all change of matter has external causes" (MA, A119; TP2, 251). He recognizes matter as capable of movement (*das Bewegliche*), infinitely divisible (*ins Unendliche teilbar*) (MA, A138, A43; TP2, 260, 215) etc., but finds it impossible to attribute absolute motion to matter itself (MA, A140; TP2, 261). Kant's assumptions are not without controversy. One might, for instance, side with Spinoza and Schelling: Nature develops the ability to think, and thinking is nature thinking itself.

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14 A.V. Guliga, *Nemetskaya Klassicheskaya Filosofia* (*German Classical Philosophy*), 2nd enl. ed. (Moscow: Rolf, 2001), p. 48.

15 Hegel, for instance, comments: "Kant accepts the categories in an empirical way, without cognizing their necessity" (Kant nimmt sie empirisch auf, und die Notwendigkeit derselben erkennt er nicht). See Hegel, HP3, 439; VGP3, 346.

Kant's historically affected conclusions can also be demonstrated by the well-known speculation around his choice of examples of synthetic and analytical judgments in the first *Critique*. One may ask why the judgment "this body is heavy" is termed by Kant empirical, whereas the judgment "this body has extension" is termed transcendental. The explanation is that the "transcendental" conditions of knowledge are in fact something empirically–historically determined. The lack of gravity, or the condition of weightlessness, was already known to 17th century thought. But the understanding of matter as *res extensa* was then still dominant (e.g., Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz) and only sublated much later, toward the end of 19th century, with the discovery of electromagnetic waves and photons. Thus, Kant could not but reproduce in his own system the historical limitations of his times.

As it has already been mentioned, the ambiguity of Kantian philosophy, the tension between transcendentalism and realism, preconditions the development of German philosophy toward Idealism. Although Kant's initial intention is to bridge the gap between rationalism and empiricism, the real novelty of his philosophy lies in its alleged *a priori* nature, something which Descartes, and not Locke, would be more inclined to agree with. From the very beginning, Kant sets a *transcendental* task: his critique "nicht sowohl mit Gegenständen, sondern mit *unserer Erkenntnisart* von Gegenständen, *so fern diese a priori möglich sein soll*, überhaupt beschäftigt" (CPR, A13/B26) and the synthetic judgments that constitute the task of pure reason are to be pursued as *a priori* possible. It is on this notion that metaphysics stands or falls. The opening statement of the *Critique* that supposedly all knowledge *begins* with experience is practically set aside, set aside not by denying the role of experience in principle, but by setting "conditions" for its possibility,[16] and even more, by making what

16 For a recent detailed defense of this position see R. Greenberg, *Kant's Theory of A Priori Knowledge* (University Park, PA: Penn State University Press, 2001). Greenberg claims that Kant is not concerned with the relationship between concept and intuition, but with the mere possibility of the transcendental concept (concept about the *possibility* of experience).

preconditions all possible experience *the focus* of Kant's investigation. Such focus sets a second meta-condition for the development of the subsequent discourse, excluding any other way of advancement.

Unlike Kant's belief, thought is not inexplicably *a priori*, for its social and historical origins, both ontogenetically and phylogenetically, are in experience. In that sense, thought is *a posteriori*, and its *a posteriori* origins are buried in the history of human evolution. But thought is also not simply and entirely empirical for it effectively transcends the immediately given, expands beyond it, penetrates in the working mechanism of the given by revealing its invariable features, and generates anticipatory knowledge. This move is what makes pure theory possible. This is not to unconditionally advocate transcendentalism. Schelling and Hegel will later launch an effective assault against it, rightfully pointing to the mind's historical nature, practical character, and natural origins. But neither Schelling nor Hegel rejects the transcendental aspect of mind. On the one hand, mind has its origins in historical and social experience; on the other hand, it possesses the ability of a transcendental "withdrawal," or phenomenological "*αποχή*." Thought is impossible without empirical material, and at the same time, thought is not reducible to empirical material. These two aspects that seem contradictory by means of formal logic need to be held simultaneously in order to make sense of the nature of human cognition. Kant poses the problem. For him, the transcendental nature of our intelligence is intended for permanent application to experience from which it also begins. However, the philosopher never elaborated the proposed twofold mechanism. In his view, the need for empirical application of thought does not amount to the empirical origin of thought, and empirical content is not the conditioning but the conditioned under the auspices of the transcendental form. Once again, I will underline that my argument is not to refute the transcendental side of cognition per se, but rather to stress its twofold nature, the movement from the manifold to the concept and vice versa.

It is worth reiterating that, while launching the investigation of "pure" concepts (which inaugurates the path toward philosophical idealism), Kant remains ontologically sober and realistic. Or better, one can straightforwardly grant that Kant is epistemologically

transcendental *and* ontologically realistic. Hence, "understanding and sensitivity can only together define the objects" (CPR, B314/A258). And all categories "do not afford us any knowledge of things; they do so only through their possible application to *empirical intuition.* In other words, they serve only for the possibility of *empirical knowledge*" (CPR, B147) and "*consequently there can be no a priori knowledge, except of objects of possible experience*" (CPR, B165-6). However, beyond demonstrating his realism and legendary attitude toward compromise, the above passages add nothing essential to the path of Kant's investigation and by no means alter Kant's radical phenomenalist[17] approach.

Kant also distinguishes between a transcendental concept and an empirical concept which "presupposes the actual presence of an object" (CPR, A50/B74). Yet this distinction does not so much aim at bridging the gap between concept and intuition, but rather at emphasizing the difference between the two. One should be unambiguous about Kant's stand as a transcendental philosopher: "Indeed it is schemata, not images of objects, which underlie our pure sensible concepts" (CPR, A140-1/B180). That is, the schemata that are meant to mediate between the manifold and pure understanding are in fact only indirectly related to the manifold.[18] For the founder of transcendentalism,

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17 Kant's phenomenalism is stressed in J.N. Findlay, *Kant and the Transcendental Object. A Hermeneutic Study* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981); N. Kemp Smith, *A Commentary on Kant's* Critique of Pure Reason (London: Macmillan, 1923); A specific interpretation of Kant's phenomenalism is also advanced in W. Sellars, *Science and Metaphysics. Variations on Kantian Themes* (New York: Humanities Press, 1968). Sellars' appropriation of Kant is appealing to the extent that it is realistic and optimistic, but equivocal to the extent that it is unreflective and positivistic, that is, uncritical about the mere concepts and rules it employs. In Rorty's analytic jargon, "as an *epistemologist* Sellars is not offering a theory about inner epistodes" (R. Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature,* p. 188).

18 This line of attack against Kant has been notably advanced by W. Sellars. Sellars characteristically emphasizes: "Indeed, it is only if Kant dis tinguishes the radically non-conceptual character of sense from the character of synthesis of apperception in intuition . . . and accompany (*sic*) the *receptivity* of sense from the *guidedness* of intuition that he can avoid the dialectic which leads from Hegel's *Phenomenology* to nineteenth-century

the possibility of objects is based on "anticipations of perception" and, therefore, sensitivity obtains a purely intellectual definition as "the capacity of receiving *representations*" (CPR, A19/B33). Kant's emphasis is on "the form of intuition … which is prior to all matter (sensations)" (CPR, A267/B323. See also A52/B74, etc.). Even the division of ordinary and transcendental logic stresses the sharp distinction between representation and the object of representation: "The difference of transcendental from empirical belongs therefore only to the critique of cognition, and does not refer to their relation to their object" (CPR, A56-7/B81). In other words, any particular object is made into a perception by the understanding. Indicative of Kant's focus, these passages are of great importance. Fichte, for example, will point exactly to these lines when under attack for subjectivism and will claim that he elaborates precisely the Kantian argument.

The patriarch of German idealism was careful enough not to let this ambiguity evolve into one-sided metaphysical idealism. One cannot say the same about Kant's followers. The entire conduct of *a priori* research on behalf of Kant in a sense preordains the development of his thought toward an idealistic metaphysics, toward the expansion of his epistemological transcendentalism into ontological/metaphysical idealism. The road to speculation, the claim of supremacy and primacy of the ideal over the real is open. There is in Kantian philosophy the tendency to dialectically balance the object and the subject, the real and its ideal representation, which is important from the standpoint of "demystifying" Hegel that I will be arguing in the second half of this book. Ideas are inexorably represented in an ideal form, and knowledge about the

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idealism" (W. Sellars, *Science and Metaphysics,* pp. 16, 29). This emphasis is key to my criticism of Hegel in the present work (Ch. 3, §2). Hegel does demand unity with the manifold (in this respect, Sellars misinterprets Hegel in this passage), but does not sufficiently propel such unity for his intentions are different than Kant's. McDowell's recent defense of Kant from Sellar's attack on this question seems to me to be unconvincing. See J. McDowell, "Self Determining Subjectivity and External Constraint," in K. Ameriks, and J. Stolzenberg, eds., *Internationales Jahrbuch des Deutschen Idealismus, vol. 3. Deutscher Idealismus und die Analytische Philosophie der Gegenwart* (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2005), pp. 21–37.

outer world is necessarily mediated through such constraint. What we know about the world is what we know about it, and what we already know preconditions any future knowledge. In that sense, Kant's great accomplishment is that he brought forth the active nature of the ideal world and its productivity.

Kant's Copernican Revolution, however, unwraps a different perspective as well, the perspective of a speculative ontology based on this ideal dimension. Not accidentally, Hegel writes in the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* that the subject-object identity is a contribution of Kantian philosophy. Transcendentalism has already established the spiritual principle (although, according to Hegel, it is to be necessarily found only *a posteriori*). Therefore, Hegel will praise Kant's claim about synthetic *a priori* principles of cognition. What Hegel will not be satisfied with is the way these principles are demonstrated. Hence, as we shall see in detail in the following chapters, Hegel will criticize Kant for "*adopting the principles of formal logic as given.*"[19]

III. The Ontological Facet: The Transcendental Self and the Thing-in-itself

In the two preceding sections, I argued mostly against Kant contesting, on the one hand, the weakness of his differentiation between science and metaphysics and, on the other hand, his failure to provide substantial argument for the unity between the transcendental and the immanent. This section will be based on the converse facet of Kant's thought, his demand that the transcendental finds truth only in its application to the real. From that perspective, I will defend Kant's ontological stance with regard to the transcendental self and the objective nature of the thing-in-itself. Such defense is pertinent to my later criticism of Hegel's absolute idealism.

Before deducing the proclaimed transcendental knowledge, Kant maintains that any cognition must be seen as an act of cognition of the transcendental subject. The representations of the manifold cannot be unified by experience itself, they can only be unified and synthesized by our rational faculty, the understanding.

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19 See Hegel, WL2, 505; SL, 789.

> But the combination of the manifold in general can never come to us through the senses, and cannot, therefore, be already contained in the pure form of sensual intuition. For it is an act of spontaneity of the faculty of representation; and since this faculty, to distinguish it from sensibility, must be entitled understanding, all combination … is an act of the understanding (CPR, B129-30).

Thus, it is the rational ability of the subject that makes the synthesis possible. Knowledge is not impersonal, but it is knowledge of the subject, the transcendental I, be that a particular individual, as Kant seems to imply (and early Fichte emphasizes), be that human spirit in general (as Schelling and Hegel suggest), the self stands at the beginning of any cognitive step. The I is looking for the truth of the world. Such truth (in quite an abundance of versions) had been traditionally proposed by pre-Kantian philosophy. In Kant, the truth is now determined from within the subject.

> It must be possible for the 'I think' to accompany all my representations; … All the manifold of intuition has, therefore, a necessary relation to the 'I think' in the same subject in which this manifold is found. But this representation is an act of *spontaneity*, that is, it cannot be regarded as belonging to sensibility. I call it *pure apperception*, to distinguish it from empirical apperception, or again, *original apperception* … The unity of self-consciousness I likewise entitle the *transcendental* unity of self-consciousness (CPR, B132).

The unity of apperception is by definition synthetic for it does not simply generalize the empirical material, which by itself is never universal, but imposes universality on the empirical material. Hence, all possible representations "in virtue of their mere subjection to the transcendental unity of apperception must be subjected to an *a priori* synthesis with its own *a priori* rules."[20] These rules are the categories, as "*the conditions of thought in a possible experience*" (CPR,

20 This is despite the fact that Kant sometimes calls such unity "analytic" (CPR, B135; B138). For a more detailed discussion, see P. Guyer, *Kant and the Claims of Knowledge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 132ff.

A111). Rationality is built in such a way that it models the manifold through the categories. In Kant's celebrated expression, "one cannot think the object save through categories."

The manifold is synthesized through the categories, but the transcendental synthesis by definition requires that the movement is reciprocal: the categories are applicable to the objects. The unity of consciousness is therefore functional, and Kant's strategy is multifaceted in deducing the categories in the first *Critique*. The transcendental synthesis can take place through the combination of three capacities. First, the synthesis involves the understanding. Second, the synthesis is possible with the involvement of the faculty of imagination[21] as "representing in intuition an object that is not itself present" (CPR, B151). It is imagination that thematizes and *schematizes* the manifold. Third, the synthesis is provided by the faculty of judgment. This latter capacity proves to be the decisive arbiter. This aspect of Kant's deduction, which denotes a tendency to rise above formalism, has been pointed out by R. Pippin[22], B. Longuenesse[23] and P. Keller.[24] Longuenesse puts it sharply:

> The "I think," or "transcendental unity of self-consciousness," has no other meaning or status than that of being the unified activity of combination and recollection on the sensible given. *There is no* unity of self-consciousness or "transcendental unity of apperception" apart

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21 On the role of imagination, see esp. B. Longuenesse, *Kant and the Capacity to Judge* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), part III, esp. p. 199ff.

22 R. Pippin, *Kant's Theory of Form,* p. 56, and esp. p. 93ff. Let it be noted that this is only a tendency, and Pippin therefore justifiably criticizes Kant's formalism.

23 See B. Longuenesse, *Kant and the Capacity to Judge.* Longuenesse argues that Kant's concept of judgment is crucial for the Transcendental Deduction and the System of Principles of the Understanding. These two, when viewed from such angle, are more sophisticated than critics argue, and less susceptible to attack.

24 P. Keller, *Kant and the Demands of Self Consciousness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), esp. pp. 65–112.

> from this effort, or *conatus* toward judgment, ceaselessly affirmed and ceaselessly threatened with dissolution in the 'welter of appearances' [*Gewühle der Erscheinungen*].[25]

With regard to its form, says Kant, each of our judgments is nothing more than "the manner in which given cognitions are brought to the objective unity of apperception" (CPR, B141), an associative reproduction of empirical intuitions, concept formation through comparison, reflection, and abstraction (JL, A145; LL, 592), etc.[26]

At the same time, the *unity* of apperception itself is not exhaustible in its acts; to the contrary, its acts *presuppose* this unity which Kant calls the highest point of transcendental philosophy to which logic and theory of knowledge must be attached (CPR, B134n). In that sense, the unity of apperception is supposed to be *objective*, that is, differentiated from both the subjective (psychological in nature and accidental) "inner feeling" (CPR, B140) that everyone has. In other words, it is a purely *logical* unity.

The transcendental unity of apperception is the presupposition behind the connections we produce in making judgments. These *must* be universally valid and common to all subjects. This point is of particular interest. Kant's attempt to ground the logical as entirely different from the psychological aims at establishing an intellectual system of principles that is efficiently independent from its material carrier. He insists that cognition *is meant* to take place in space and time, and in that sense his philosophy can be interpreted as offering the conceptual background to cognitive psychology.[27] Nevertheless, what the philosopher examines is cognition beyond space and time; he explores "pure" logic as

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25 B. Longuenesse, *Kant and the Capacity to Judge,* p. 394.

26 *Ibid.,* Part II, esp. pp. 81–187.

27 Cf. P. Kitcher, *Kant's Transcendental Psychology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990). The difficulty that cognitive psychological interpretation faces pertains to the nature of the purely logical as different from psychological. Starting from the empirical individual, cognitive psychology ends up in philosophical dualism. For the nature of the ideal cannot be explained on the basis of the extrapolation of data obtained from empirical observation. I shall discuss in detail this issue in Chapter 3 in relation to genetic epistemology.

different from "applied" logic. The same strategy underlies Kant's criticism of the Paralogisms in the Transcendental Dialectic. It is characterized by an urge to find an objective point of reference, an impartial logical standpoint from which knowledge could be deduced as non-empirical and *intersubjectively* valid, adherent to a "universal consciousness" (CPR, B132).

Kant's endeavor to separate the logical from the psychological parallels his attempt to separate the transcendental from the empirical, and faces significant difficulties: instead of being demonstrated, the intersubjective validity of categorical knowledge is only called upon and addressed as *de facto* existing. Thus, it remains a mysterious *modus operandi* of the individual subject for which such knowledge is intended. The problem emerges more sharply in the third *Critique*, when one has to distinguish between determinative and reflective judgments. In that work, Kant employs the *sensus communis* as "the necessary condition of the universal communicability of our knowledge, which is presupposed in every logic and every principle of knowledge that is not one of skepticism" (CJ, A65/B66). Kant implicitly points to the dependence of the self on history, tradition, and culture.[28] This is what makes the third *Critique* attractive to political interpretations, such as that of Hannah Arendt. Kant touches upon the socially defined nature of the self and objectivity; he wants to unite judgment with "the collective reason of humanity (*die gesamte Menschenvernunft*), and thus to avoid the illusion of holding the private subjective conditions for objective" (CJ, A155/B157). The impression is that on the issue of reflective judgments, Kant attempts to remedy transcendentalism from the danger of collapsing into empiricism,[29] for empiricism would necessarily lead back to dualism (as it fails to explain intersubjectivity, the activity of mind, and the purity of its ideal constructions). Nevertheless,

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28 See the discussion in K. Goudeli, *Challenges to German Idealism, Schelling, Fichte, and Kant.* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), pp. 39–64, esp. 51–8.

29 Kant's vulnerability was shown in Strawson's acute and largely justified criticism. See P.F. Strawson, *The Bounds of Sense. An Essay on Kant's* Critique of Pure Reason (New York: Methuen &Co. 1966), pp. 72–118, 162–174.

in the famous §21 of the *Critique of Judgement*, intersubjectivity is called upon by Kant as a reasonable hypothesis rather than methodologically scrutinized as *the* unconditional presupposition of the self.

Transcendental apperception, as well as the transcendental deduction of knowledge, do not have a "purely logical" formal and ahistorical explanation. On the one hand, Kant wants to do exactly that, deduce knowledge in its purity. On the other hand, not satisfied with dualism, he wants to relate knowledge to the real subject. As a matter of fact, knowledge cannot be objectively justified as knowledge if it is confined within the isolated individual subject. It is Hegel's identification of the "I" with the "We" in the *Phenomenology* that shall shed light onto the nature of the objectivity of the logical. Moreover, such objectivity is not an unqualified objectivity but (partly against Hegel's own conclusions) the historical contour and relativity of human rationality. Kant implies but does not advance the grounding of rationality on *historical* experience. To the contrary, his notion of transcendental subjectivity is, as he frequently suggests, a static concept,[30] and equally static and ahistorical is his deduced matrix of *a priori* principles. Kant has then no other choice but to rely thoroughly on the principles of formal logic.[31] Not by accident, he is often charged with failure to offer a "satisfactory theory of the self," to reconcile the empirical with the transcendental self, to explain the moral ego and the unity of all the faculties of reason.[32] (These dichotomies will later lead to Fichte's deliberate emphasis on epistemological monism.)

To what degree could Kant's stance be disparaged from a "purely logical" standpoint? Paul Guyer, for example, charges Kant with the failure to offer any defense of his argument, and asserts that the transcendental deduction cannot stand up to

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30 K. Goudeli, *op. cit.*, pp. 21–23.

31 Kant "believed without question to the finality of Euclidean Geometry, Newtonian Physics, and Aristotelian Logic; and on these beliefs he founded others, still more questionable" (P.F. Strawson, *op.cit.*; p. 23).

32 See, for example, P.R. Wolff, *Kant's Theory of Mental Activity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963), p. 109.

scrutiny. Guyer's claim is reminiscent of the objections raised by Jacobi and Schulze in the early reactions to the first *Critique*. One has to begin with the *belief* that one has a certain manifold of representations, but "genuine *knowledge* . . . may have to await empirical interpretation of this initial impression."[33] Guyer rightfully wonders why Kant does not provide a proof of the unity of apperception but, instead, proceeds "as if cognition of *objects* were itself the necessary condition of the unity of apperception, and thus as if the *a priori* conditions for the unity of apperception could be derived from conditions for the knowledge of objects instead of vice versa."[34] Further, Guyer claims that Kant "failed to establish a firm connection between the unity of apperception and the categories" and overall, "formally speaking, the transcendental deduction is a failure".[35] The latter charge refers to the well-known problem of the selection of the categories (borrowed largely from Aristotle) and their sequence. It is an objection often raised in Hegel's writings.

The alleged failure of the deduction is the result of the missing proof of the unity of apperception. In my opinion, the charge is justified.[36] Kant circularly proffers *a priori* "pure" concepts that are supposed to be proven only *a posteriori*. Therefore, they cannot be purely logically deduced. Hegel's *Phenomenology* has pointed to this riddle too: knowledge in its "purity" already presupposes knowledge. As a matter of fact, knowledge has to be grounded elsewhere, on real historical experience. In my view, the differences between the A and B Deductions in the first *Critique* (Kant's emphasis on the "I think" in the second deduction) demonstrate the philosopher's ambiguous degree of reliance on

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33 P. Guyer, "The Transcendental Deduction of the Categories," in P. Guyer, *The Cambridge Companion to Kant* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p. 144. See also *Kant and the Claims of Knowledge,* p. 139ff.

34 *Ibid.*, p. 151.

35 *Ibid*, pp. 153, 155.

36 Kant faces parallel problems with his deductions in all three Critiques and the *Opus Postumun*. For more discussion see Eckart Förster, ed., *Kant's Transcendental Deductions: the Three Critiques and the* Opus Postumum, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989).

experience.[37] However, the problem of self-sufficient justification of epistemological claims is thereby only amplified. To the extent to which Kant wants to propel his epistemological foundationalism and "purely logical" justification, he is obliged to be fully transparent. But full transparency is either circularly defensible[38] or it leads to dualism.[39] To the extent to which Kant wants to avoid dualism, he has to stress the "I think." At this point, the argument leads back to the relation between the transcendental and empirical self.

There is a sober explanation of the above dilemma. In my view, the transcendental self does not play a purely epistemological role in Kant's deduction. The philosopher wants to walk a fine line between an epistemologically foundationalist claim about the self and the ontological/metaphysical skepticism (or even agnosticism) that his system presents. On the one hand, Kant drags his "Cartesian Anxiety"[40] into his analysis; on the other hand, he essentially argues for the relativity of the human condition. On the basis of the relativity of the human condition, the transcendental unity

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37 Cf. here M. Meyer, *Science et Métaphysique chez Kant* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1988). Meyer advances a Heideggerian criticism of Kant that is entirely reliant on the issue of whether *logos* can be epistemologically recollected as *logos* after it has been scattered into reality.

38 Cf. D. Henrich's argument in D. Henrich, "Identity and Objectivity: An Inquiry into Kant's Transcendental Deduction," in D. Henrich, *The Unity of Reason* (Cambridge (Mass.): Harvard University Press, 1994), pp. 123–210. Henrich has argued for a version of "moderate identity" of the transcendental subject, and offered similar interpretations of the beginning of Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre* and of Hegel's *Logic.* (See also my discussion in the following chapters.)

39 Here is where H. Allison's defense leads: "The essential feature of apperception … is that it is a consciousness of the activity of thinking, not of a thinker." See H. Allison, *Kant's Transcendental Idealism. An Interpretation and Defense* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), p. 290. Thought without a subject is either nonsensical or grounded on the ontological independence of thought, that is, on metaphysical dualism. This is why Kant rejected transcendental realism.

40 On the notion of 'Cartesian Anxiety,' see R.J. Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism,* esp. pp. 16–20.

of self-consciousness, "tautological"[41] as it is, is no statement of new knowledge, but the confirmation of the mere fact of the subject's existence.[42] In the Paralogisms, Kant makes it clear that his understanding of the "I think" is taken only "problematically . . . in order to see what properties are applicable to the subject" (CPR, A347/B405). Kant is simply accepting a fact, the negation of which, as already argued by Descartes, would involve a self-contradiction. The fact is that without the existence of the self, any cognitive claim would be impossible:

> in the transcendental synthesis of the manifold of representations in general, and therefore in the synthetic original unity of apperception, I am conscious of myself, not as I appear to myself, nor as I am in myself, but only that I am (CPR, B157).

The purpose of my argument is not to identify Kant with Descartes. Unlike Descartes, Kant follows what in modern jargon would be called phenomenological procedure, fulfilling the space between subject and object, not reconstructing the object itself. However, the Kantian cognizing subject, just like the Cartesian, stands at the beginning of knowledge. The unity of consciousness is an inescapable condition of all possible knowledge, be that the ordinary conception of the world, its epistemological scrutiny or scientific thought. As I shall argue in the next chapter, Fichte, too, concedes the impossibility of overcoming the Cartesian *cogito*; and even Hegel, who arguably undertakes a different attempt in the *Phenomenology*, cannot but presuppose the self.

In the above-described sense (which is existentially modest and deliberately less transparent), charges against Kant fail to take into account the all-permeating role that the distinction between phenomena and the thing-in-itself plays in Kantian philosophy, as well as his corresponding redefinition of metaphysics. What Kant

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41 P.R. Wolff, *Kant's Theory of Mental Activity,* p. 105.

42 The same problem is identified by Karl Ameriks as duplicity between the "epistemic subject" and "existing subject" in Kant's deduction. See K. Ameriks, *Kant and the Historical Turn*, p. 61.

calls attention to is the *de facto* finite nature of human knowledge. It is only its *interpretation* that comes *a priori*. Humans simply find themselves in such a state. The transcendental unity of the self is the unearthed *condition* of the self. This moment will be conspicuously elaborated by Fichte.

Kant's attitude seems more to be an indication of his deliberate ambiguity. Ontologically, transcendentalism evolves either into thorough idealism or into dogmatism (materialism). Epistemologically, transcendentalism evolves either into thorough rationalism or into empiricism. The transcendental philosopher intentionally remains in the middle. Had Kant attempted to overcome Descartes, he would have had to follow the path of the old metaphysics that he tried to abolish; yet, had Kant suggested an empirical interpretation of knowledge, he would have had to succumb to epistemological skepticism.

Kant thoroughly acknowledges the limitations that experience imposes on cognition – no universality can be found therein. However, there is some universality which is credible, it is the universality that human rationality attaches to the object, by being equipped to judge according to certain initial principles. This ability offers the certainty that the professed truths have universal validity, not only for the subject, but also for the object, insofar as the object is preconditioned by human cognitive abilities. Hence, the subject is able to format "*a priori* synthetic judgments." Although logically universal, such universality is, in ontological terms, a restricted or conditioned universality. (An "unconditioned" universality is denied by the existence of the thing-in-itself.) The task, therefore, consists in the logical investigation of those initial principles. Kant reduces metaphysics to logic, or conversely, he expands logic into realms which traditionally were considered the realms of metaphysics.

Nevertheless, metaphysics does not disappear, but lurks behind Kant's epistemological anxiety for transcendental philosophy which is positioned between two ontological poles: the subjective (for which Kant's foundationalist insistence is beyond question) and the objective (the possibility of ultimate knowledge, which Kant rejects). It is to the extent to which Kant wants to pursue pure and unconditional (thus, foundationalist) epistemology that his philosophy is susceptible to ontological-metaphysical interpretation.

Perhaps the most notable example of an ontological-metaphysical reading is found in Heidegger's work. Heidegger has been viciously attacked for his interpretation of the role of imagination in Kant's first *Critique*. However, Heidegger's approach is scandalous only to the extent to which Heidegger radically denies the cognitive nature of the *Critique*[43] and invokes imagination as a device of metaphysics. The category then is transformed from *σχήμα του λόγου* into *σχήμα του όντος*.[44] In that sense, the finitude of human reason is unavoidably underscored, and imagination comes to play the utterly vital role in cognition by overwhelming reason: "The imagination forms in advance, and before all experience of the essent, the aspect of the horizon of objectivity as such."[45] Unquestionably, the final and the absolute can only be imagined. Philosophy that is oriented toward the transcendent (I include the thing-in-itself therein) is doomed to such a dilemma. Heidegger puts the question pointedly, but in ontological terms:

> To represent conceptually means to represent "in general." The "generality" of the act of representation becomes a problem as soon as the formation of concepts as such is called into question. But if the categories *as ontological* concepts are not homogeneous with the empirical objects and their concepts, then the "generality" of the categories is not merely that of a higher degree of abstraction, that possessed by a superior or even supreme, ontic "genus" .... What is the meaning of the term *generalis* in the characterization of ontology as *metaphysica generalis*? The problem of the schematism of the pure concepts of the understanding is a question concerning the inmost essence of ontological knowledge.[46]

Heidegger's argument holds true *only* if we assume that the categories are ontological concepts, and Kant pursues *only* ontology. What is Kant's intention, though? As M. Vetö insightfully puts it, Kant's urge leads toward "the grand hypothesis of the

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43 M. Heidegger, *Kant and the Problem of Metaphysics*. Trans. J.S. Churchill (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1962), p. 21.
44 *Ibid.*, p. 69.
45 *Ibid.*, p. 138
46 *Ibid.*, pp. 115–6 (*emphasis mine*).

Transcendental Dialectic. Imagination is perhaps itself understanding and reason! The identification with reason will not be always thematized by Kant, but will constitute the destiny of German idealism, notably through Schelling."[47] When Kant realizes such a prospect, he stops. He distinguishes the figurative synthesis of the imagination from the conceptual synthesis of the understanding, and the ontologically ideal from the epistemologically ideal. He wants to engage in pure epistemology (although without realizing that it can be stretched toward ontology), but not deliberate ontology. Heidegger himself comes to acknowledge that this is the case:

> Kant brought the possibility of metaphysics before this abyss. He saw the unknown; he had to draw back. Not only did the imagination fill him with alarm, but in the meantime [between the first and the second editions] he has also come more and more under the influence of pure reason as such.[48]

As I have already pointed out, in the Second Deduction, Kant comes to stress the role of the finite subject, to emphasize that the categories have no other application than experience and, further in the *Critique*, to add the Refutation of Idealism. Once Kant arrives at an ontologically clear stance, the real struggle he faces is the reconciliation between the transcendental and the immanent which I have discussed above.

Let me now proceed to examine another problem. Having argued with Kant for the modest nature of the transcendental self, I shall attempt now to combine it with the role of the thing-in-itself.

The perception of any object becomes meaningful only via the concept that the I attaches to it. All possible intuitions and their relatedness through the categories take place in time and space, with the latter two not existing by themselves, but rather being attached to the manifold by the self. In addition, the presumed unity of an object presupposes some unified space to which the

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47 M. Vetö, *De Kant à Schelling. Les des voies de l'idéalisme allemand* (Grenoble: Jérôme Millon, 1998), p. 134.

48 M. Heidegger, *op. cit.*, p. 173.

idea of this object is assumed to correspond. One represents the object as possible in space (CPR, B162). Respectively, things are represented as following one another in time. Whereas each time event is separated from another, rationality organizes experience in time sequence. Moreover, it organizes time-events not only as following one another, but also as being related to one another by the so-called causality chains, as causing one another. This is the category of causality:

> Now this synthetic unity, as a condition *a priori* under which I combine the manifold of an *intuition in general*, is – if I abstract from the constant form of *my* inner intuition, namely, time – the category of *cause*, by means of which, when I apply it to my sensibility, I determine *everything that happens* in accordance with the relation which it prescribes, and I do so *in time in general*. Thus my apprehension of such an event, and therefore the event itself, considered as a possible perception, is subject to the concept of the *relation of effects* and *causes*, and so in all other cases (CPR, B163).

Since experience is never full, it is, therefore, never reliable. Accepting Hume's argument against causality, Kant still claims that there *are* causal relationships, but they stem from the subject, and not from the object.

A cardinal difference between the two thinkers needs to be emphasized at this point. It is obvious that Kant does not address the same question as Hume does. At best, it could be claimed that he does so in the epistemological sense. But there is an inseparable ontological aspect that cannot be neglected.[49] The clash and mutual dependence between the two tasks of philosophy, the epistemological and the metaphysical, has already been argued in the previous sections. In the ontological sense, not only does Kant not reject Hume, but he does not even intend to do so,[50] except for

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49 As a rule, the ontological facet is omitted when the commonness between Kant and Hume is stressed. See for example L.W. Beck, *Essays on Kant and Hume* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1978), pp. 111–164.

50 See E. Watkins, *Kant and the Metaphysics of Causality*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

the subjective sense that transcendental philosophy introduces: certainty is grounded *if and only if* it arises from the subject. Related to the object, certainty is only an "as if" certainty. The understanding can reach certainty (and thus overcome Hume's aporia), not because certainty "is deduced from experience, but because experience is deduced from it" [the understanding]. This is how intelligence and experience are related. Kant admits that into "such an entirely reverse way of connection Hume would have never fallen" (PFM, A102; TP2, 106). Hume is pursuing a rather different issue, namely, the existence of causality *independently* of its subjective perception. Kant, conversely, substantiates a fundamental regress from experience to the *conditions* of experience and reformulates the Humean question[51] by denying the word "independently." Hence, the only thing that one can know is that as far as an object becomes the object of possible experience, it *must* comply with the transcendental requirements of knowledge. Beyond that, there is the thing-in-itself.

Unlike in Hume, philosophy in Kant adopts a radically different orientation. For Kant, the question is no more how the world is, but how the subject perceives the world. Whereas Hume talks about the possibility of the *object*, Kant essentially argues about the possibility of *cognition* of the object. In the "traditional," pre-Kantian philosophical sense, Kant does not renounce Hume, but rather agrees with him. Kant simply indicates that the subject is in a sense "entitled" to claims such as "causality" because of its *a priori* structure of rationality. Therefore, metaphysics can resolve its issues not because the object itself really corresponds to the way it is being understood, but because rationality understands the object in such a way. Rationality sets the form, the frame, through which all knowledge of the object is filtered.

The German philosopher offers no explanation as to whether the thing-in-itself is causal or not. However, this is the key issue

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51 "Whereas Hume may be said to have asked, "How *could we possibly* be justified in employing the concept of cause?" Kant found a way to ask, "Under what conditions *can* we employ the concept of cause?" or, more generally, "How are synthetic judgments *a priori* possible?"". See Franks P., *All or Nothing,* p. 150.

for Hume and all pre-Kantian philosophy. This issue was raised already by the very first reactions to the *Critique of Pure Reason*, not only from a theological angle (e.g., by Jacobi), but also from an epistemological angle. Although Reinhold set off in a positivistic manner to elaborate the "scientific" nature of transcendental philosophy, Schulze sharply spotted the quandary: Kant does not and cannot essentially refute Hume. Kant rather "presupposes as established … that each segment of human knowledge has a real ground that causes it."[52] However, this is not the real problem, for "according to Hume, … the issue is what, in fact, is to be found in experience; whereas according to the *Critique of Reason*, the issue is the origin of what is present in our cognition."[53]

Kant had meticulously reread Hume right before writing his *Critique of Pure Reason*. During the so-called "silent decade"[54] Hume was one of Kant's most frequently cited authors. There are striking parallels between Kant's and Hume's criticism of rationalism, and Kant even borrows Hume's examples in his own critique of causality.[55] The transcendental philosopher is certainly not an empiricist. He solves the dispute between empiricism and rationalism mostly in favor of the latter. He knows that the questions that Hume asks (e.g., "Will the sun rise tomorrow?") cannot be responded to affirmatively *from within Hume's system*. If it were to derive all from experience, then it would be impossible to uphold universality, just as Hume argues. However, arguing epistemologically against Hume, Kant agrees with the Scottish thinker on the essential ontological question and never abandons Humean skepticism as an ontological position. The notion of the thing-in-itself simply forbids such a move.

Kant's ontological skepticism is counterbalanced by his epistemological optimism. In order to save the latter, he divides the world into two sharply distinguished realms, the realm of phenomena

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52 G. di Giovanni, and H.S. Harris, eds., *Texts in the Development of Post-Kantian Idealism* (New York: SUNY, 1985), p. 115.

53 *Ibid.*, p. 120.

54 See F. Beiser, "Kant's Intellectual Development: 1746–1781," in P. Guyer, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Kant,* pp. 26–61.

55 *Ibid.*, p. 55.

and the realm of the thing-in-itself. The division results in a strictly defined triadic cognitive structure: mind–phenomena–thing-in-itself. One can move from the first to the second and from the second to the first, with the first conditioning the perception of the second. The third, however, is hidden behind an epistemological "veil of ignorance"; it is just a *noumenon*, and its nature is the subject of speculation.

But the thing-in-itself is also the personification of Kantian philosophical humility. It designates the rejection of ultimate ontological answers, the understanding of humans as miniscule fractions in a huge, unknown, and tremendously complex universe – an understanding which is as ordinary in the age of Freud and Einstein as pioneering it was in the mid-eighteenth century. Thus, Kant is pertinent to modern philosophy for the most simple and *prima facie* reasons: for advancing a humble view of the world and for circumscribing a new role for philosophy that is still germane to current discourses.[56] This takes place to a large extent against Kant's own intention and his epistemologically assertive tone. However, his conception of the thing-in-itself denotes modesty that tempers his epistemological foundationalism.

Given the emphasis on the contrast between the two tasks of philosophy, the epistemological and the metaphysical, I interpret the thing-in-itself as deserving greater importance than most Kantians usually allow. In the first section, it had been argued that Kant's epistemological assertiveness outshines his ontological skepticism and gives rise to the grand projects of Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel. I also maintain that the thing-in-itself has innermost ontological importance, and this is significant for my critical review of the projects of his successors in the following chapters of this book. The thing-in-itself has more than a nominal function in Kantian philosophy.

The emphasis on the insignificance of the thing-in-itself has been a critical issue for the defense of Kant in the works of Neokantians, such as Natorp, Cohen, Cassirer, and many others.

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56 See, for example, R. Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*. This is not to espouse Rorty's relativism *in toto*, but rather to support post-metaphysical philosophy. (See also my discussion in the introduction.)

Ernst Cassirer,[57] to take a typical example, argues that the notion of "appearance" has no metaphysical implications, for it was simply borrowed from the natural scientific discourse of Kant's era. Therefore, one needs not seek actuality of matter as hidden beyond our spatial representations. It is not an unknown entity but "something directly given to us through the form of outer experience."[58] In Cassirer's reading of Kant, matter does possess empirical reality, yet it is nothing more than appearance. The latter denotes "simply the object of our experience, which as such can be given to us only under the conditions of experience."[59] Does matter exist as "beyond" and does it possess its own particularities *independently* of our experience of it? The question is not simply rhetorical, as Cassirer implies. For instance, Kant's Transcendental Dialectic relies entirely on the response to this question.

Cassirer's deflationary understanding of matter results in a parallel deflationary understanding of the thing-in-itself. Since "Natural Science will never reveal to us the inner of things, i.e., that which is not appearance," then, Cassirer reasons, the thing-in-itself has no "physical values."

> That one cannot cognize the things-in-themselves … this sentence must be understood above all as a "transcendental" one: in the sense that it deals not so much with the objects, but with our way of cognizing the objects.[60]

It appears that the function of the thing-in-itself is simply to ensure the importance of the intellectual grasp of reality: if it were for us to cognize the essence beyond the given reality, this would be equal to the impossibility of cognition because reality is always given to us in experience. Therefore, the thing-in-itself secures the role of intelligence about experience by postulating a "beyond".

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57 E. Cassirer, *Das Erkenntnisproblem in der Philosophie und Wissenschaft der Neueren Zeit,* Zweiter Band, in *Gesammelte Werke,* Hamburger Ausgabe, 3. Bd. (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1999). Acthes Buch: *Die Kritische Philosophie,* pp. 489–638.

58 *Ibid.*, p. 614.

59 *Ibid.*, p. 615.

60 *Ibid.*, p. 617.

Similar to Cassirer's is the approach of G. Prauss.[61] Prauss conspicuously argues that the "thing-in-itself" and the "thing-in-itself *considered*" are not one and the same in Kant's works. In most cases, Kant employs the latter term because the former is just the negative side of appearance, and not a distinct metaphysical entity. Kant is not interested in the latter, but in the former, in the appearance. He therefore proposes a two-step scale of knowledge in which the affection or intuition is just a singular case that is subsumed under the *a priori* schema. Kant creates a non-empirical science which is, in Prauss's admission, "enigmatically" and "paradoxically" meant for empirical use. Moreover, Prauss also concedes the questionable nature of his interpretation by acknowledging that Kant's own treatment of the thing-in-itself is far from being unambiguous. Prauss admits that in several passages Kant has in mind indeed the thing-in-itself and not only the thing-in-itself *considered*.

In an era of scientific optimism, it is comprehensible that Neokantianism tends to interpret Kant in a realistic way and spare him from accusations of impracticality, cognitive pessimism, and relativism.[62] In respect to the prospects of science, Kant himself was indeed far from pessimistic. He was very much interested in science and his transcendental philosophy was always meant as a philosophical interpretation of the exact sciences.[63] Furthermore,

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61 G. Prauss, *Kant und das Problem der Dinge an sich,* 2., verb. Aufl. (Bonn: Bouvier, 1977). Prauss's stance is uncritically shared by H. Allison in his influential study of Kant. Allison wants to show that the talk about "things-in-themselves considered" does not violate the claim that they are unknowable (H. Allison H. *Kant's Transcendental Idealism* p. 237). Advancing the stratagem to read Kant as a "transcendental realist" (despite Kant's own renunciation), Allison plausibly proposes to distinguish between ontological and epistemic conditions of knowledge. However, the development of German idealism has shown that unqualified epistemic claims cannot be thoroughly upheld without collapsing into ontological claims. The ontological significance of the thing-in-itself is a *conditio sine qua non* if one wants to avoid such quandary.

62 See, for example, H. Allison, *op. cit.*, p. 5–6.

63 For a very well informed and lucid discussion of Kant's interest in the sciences, see esp. M. Friedman, *Kant and the Exact Sciences* (Cambridge (Mass.): Harvard University Press, 1992).

Kant's ambiguity on the relationship between science and metaphysics (the denial of old metaphysics, on the one hand and its transcendental "scientific" reintroduction, on the other) makes the Neokantian interpretation conceivable.

However, there is no point in turning the thing-in-itself into a mere subjective device. If the thing-in-itself had only nominal importance, then it would not be needed at all. Kant could have denoted only the transcendental mediation of knowledge and stopped forcing the notion of the thing-in-itself throughout his writings. But his insistence on that notion is not accidental. For Kant, the thing-in-itself is not a mere projection of the subject, but also an independent entity which appears in order to become the object of experience. The thing-in-itself has objective existence by the mere fact that besides the acknowledgement of its existence, there is no role of intelligence therein. The thing-in-itself is a philosophical obscuration for the knowledge we lack, and its function is not only to secure the transcendental conditions of cognition, but also to delineate the limits of it.

Actually, what Kantians fail to notice is what Kant himself neglected, namely the "de-transcendentalization" of knowledge. It is the notion that things are *only* given under the auspices of our transcendental nature ("the condition of possible experience") what is problematic in his position. For thought is not only of transcendental origins and not simply the *condition* of perceiving reality, but also the *outcome* of interaction with reality, the result of history and praxis. At some point, thought becomes a precondition of cognition and able to quasi-independently produce new knowledge that "mysteriously" corresponds to reality. Moreover, not only the categories but also ideal constructions in general as constitutive parts of rationality set up a framework in which things are perceived, understood and judged. Yet, this is something that comes about "subsequently," and hence is also subjected to social and historical analysis. That is, thought is not simply and unequivocally transcendental.

An approach opposed to Cassirer's and Prauss's deflationary analysis on every other account, rather surprisingly grounds its philosophical framework on the same presupposition, namely, the annihilation of the importance of the thing-in-itself. Hegel and traditional Marxism, each for different reasons, have long ago treated the thing-in-itself with irony and proceeded to a

careless restoration of metaphysics and ontology. Hegel's sarcasms are countless.[64] In Marxism, Friedrich Engels set the tone when he famously contrasted the soundness of the thing-in-itself to the real digestive effects of a pudding in one's stomach, and similar examples can be found in the works of the most prominent Marxists. Such comments are reminiscent of the way in which an opponent of Berkeley had kicked a stone in order to prove that matter exists.

Beyond such ironic remarks, the background for the Hegelian and Marxist objections has to do with issues that Kant had brought up but failed to elaborate upon, namely the practical and teleological aspect of consciousness, the relationship between the transcendental and the empirical, as well as the relationship between the rational and the historical. As far as those aspects of the Kantian system go, the Hegelian and Marxism criticism is warranted. However, the epistemological and the metaphysical tasks of philosophy need to be differentiated. Hegel intentionally unites them, and Engels also keeps them together when he correlates the reproduction of a natural process to the conquering of the thing-in-itself:

> If we are able to prove the correctness of our conception of a natural process by making it ourselves, bringing it into being out of its conditions and using it for our own purposes into the bargain, then there is an end of the Kantian incomprehensible "thing-in-itself." The chemical substances produced in the bodies of plants and animals remained just such "things-in-themselves" until organic chemistry began to produce them one after another.[65]

Kant is well aware of the prospects of advancement of science, and the alleged impossibility of the reproduction of a natural process is

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64 "According to a metaphysics prevalent at the moment, we cannot know things because they are uncompromisingly exterior to us. It might be worth noticing that even the animals, which go after things, grab, maul, and consume them, are not so stupid as these metaphysicians." See Hegel, ENZ2, 19; PN1, 200.

65 F. Engels, *Ludwig Feuerbach and the Outcome of Classical German Philosophy* (New York: International Publishers, 1981), pp. 32–33.

certainly not what he has in mind when proposing the thing-in-itself. Without inquiring into the ideological background of Engels' interpretation, I would contrast his position on the thing-in-itself with his repeated caution that absolute truths are well "beyond reach," "imaginary," and "must be let aside."[66] These claims are irreconcilable with the renunciation of the thing-in-itself.

Kant is clear about the fact that phenomena are neither representations of the subject of cognition (which otherwise offers a lot in the process) nor mere illusions. Phenomena represent the way the thing-in-itself appears. The thing-in-itself demarcates the negative boundaries of cognition.[67] A prospect of a universe in which everything (even potentially) is known is unimaginable. Above all, such a prospect would give rise to normative problems.

An objection to my argument would be that it rests on the assumption of the infinity of cognition. But such an assumption would have only a negative value. It does not maintain the finitude or infinity of cognition but rather its unfathomable prospect. Therefore, one has to accept the possibility of future modification or even denial of what is now considered known. Another objection would be that the mere assertion of the existence of the thing-in-itself *already* denotes knowledge of it.[68] Therefore, the thing-in-itself cannot be entirely unknowable. Yet, this would

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66 *Ibid.*, pp. 21, 22, 25, 55.

67 A comment on Sellars' scientific optimism is here appropriate. Sellars writes: "In any case, a consistent scientific realist must hold that the world of everyday experience is a phenomenal world in the Kantian sense, the obtainability of which is explained not, as for Kant, by things in themselves known only to God, but by scientific objects about which, barring catastrophe, we shall know more and more as the years go by" (W. Sellars, *op. cit.*, p. 173). That we shall know "more and more" is a claim that Kant would certainly embrace. However, does this increase of knowledge amount to a proof of the overcoming of the thing-in-itself?

68 This objection originates in Hegel's criticism and is widely reiterated in the secondary literature. See, for example, R. Kroner, *op.cit.*, vol. 1, pp. 109ff; V. I. Shynkaruk, *Teorya Posnanya, Logika, y Dialektika Kanta. Kant kak Rodonachalnyk Nemetskoy Klassitcheskoy Filosofii* [*Kant's Theory of Knowledge, Logic, and Dialectic. Kant as the Originator of German Classical Philosophy*] (Kiev: Naukova Dumka, 1973), p. 191.

already be a positive claim about the thing-in-itself, whereas the thing-in-itself represents only an empty acknowledgement that by itself offers no knowledge. It is therefore reasonable to maintain that the Kantian thing-in-itself is ontologically, and even normatively, unsurpassable.

IV. From the Ontological to the Logical: Understanding, Reason, and Totality[69]

Recapitulating Kant's position, one is presented with a rather pessimistic prospect of cognition. The human subject stands in front of an unknown universe, and the only weapon the subject possesses, the rational ability, is not applicable to the thing-in-itself. The universal is *thinkable*, but this does not necessarily mean that the universal exists. The infinite is *thinkable*, but this does not mean that the infinite exists. God is *thinkable*, but this does not mean that God exists. Of course, the intriguing aspect here is that, except for the notion of God, man can *use* these concepts in a practical and efficient way. The infinite, for instance, is a concept employed in mathematical equations. In the *Prolegomena*, Kant even notes that "in mathematics and natural science human reason knows restrictions (*Schranken*) but no limits (*Grenzen*)" (PFM, A167; TP2, 142). In this way, reason can make use of its findings, expand its cognitions, establish laws, etc. The difference, according to Kant, is that in these fields, reason deals solely with the phenomena.

With regard to the outside nature, knowledge is mediated by the categories of the understanding, the ability to cognize objects of possible experience (CPR, B137). Possessing constitutive power in the realm of phenomena, the understanding is "the lawgiver of nature." To the investigation of this issue, Kant devotes his Transcendental Analytic. Yet, the understanding

69 With the kind permission of the publisher, the following sections reproduce material from my previously published essay "The *Canon* and the *Organon* of Thought: Formal Logic and Contradiction in Kant's Theoretical Philosophy" (*Idealistic Studies*, Volume 36, Issue 2, 2006, pp. 123–139).

alone is a necessary but not a sufficient condition of human knowledge. If it were possible to separately characterize this faculty (temporarily abstracting from the fact that human rationality forms as a unified stream of understanding and reason), its knowledge would be unreflective, meaningless, and, in a sense, thoughtless. It is the task of reason to "hold the general understanding in limits" (PFM, A12; TP2, 56), and to make human cognitions self-critical and meaningful. Reason's mission is to regulate the understanding, identify its assumptions, and make sense of its analytic endeavors. As the supreme rational ability, reason is the faculty that offers principles (CPR, A405) and specifies the concepts used by the lower faculty (CPR, B684ff). Already in Kant, well before Hegel, the understanding has a primarily "analytic" function, whereas as reason operates in a "synthetic" and unifying way. Hence, "it is a business of reason to make all possible empirical actions of the understanding systematic" (CPR, A664/B692). The understanding is oriented toward the phenomena, and reason regulates the orientation itself.

> Understanding may be regarded as a faculty which secures the unity of appearances by means of rules, and reason as being the faculty which secures the unity of rules of understanding under principles. Accordingly, reason never applies itself directly to experience or to any object, but to understanding, in order to give to the manifold knowledge of the latter an *a priori* unity by means of concepts, a unity which may be called the unity of reason, and which is quite different in kind from any unity that can be accomplished by the understanding (CPR, A302/B359).

Reason is the crowning of the edifice of knowledge, aiming at securing systematic unity of thought. Both reason and understanding are of transcendental nature and, although they have different functions, understanding is oriented toward experience while reason is oriented toward understanding, thus the harmony of cognition is maintained. However, reason's function is not simply extensional, but rather intentional, and such dichotomy proves to be particularly troublesome for philosophical cognition. Traditionally philosophical cognition is not only

mundane cognition, that is, an explanation of how the world opens to humans. Philosophical cognition also aspires to explain how the world is in its intimate features. Reason is aimed at not only the transcendental but also the transcendent. Thus, the fundamental questions of metaphysics, according to Kant (*and* pre-Kantian philosophy) are the questions of God, freedom, and immortality. It is for the investigation of these unfathomable but also momentous and vital issues that Kant invokes the faculty of reason, devotes to them the Transcendental Dialectic. His inquiry is accordingly structured in the form of a critique of rational psychology (paralogisms), cosmology (antinomies), and theology (ideal of reason).

In the first part of Transcendental Dialectic, the philosopher examines reason's dialectic with reference to unity of the subjective conditions of experience, that is, the soul. There, Kant discusses reason's contradictory conclusions about human spirituality (the question of idealism, immortality of the soul, etc.), the so-called "Paralogisms of Reason," which he claims to have eventually solved. In the third part of Transcendental Dialectic, Kant's examination of the idea of God has an unsurpassable profundity and humility that strikingly contrasts with Hegel's arrogance. I will not challenge Kant's position on these issues; rather, in what follows, I will focus on the issue of the antinomies that are dealt with in the second part of reason's dialectic. This part seems to be of the major relevance for the purpose of tracing the evolution of the epistemological stance of German idealism. It refers to the objective side of knowledge, the relation of reason to reality and not to metaphysical principles. This is what Kant calls *Weltbegriffe* and *kosmologische Ideen*. In examining the problem, my objective is not to challenge Kant's conclusions *per se* but to assess his methodological stance toward the dialectic of reason and to see whether or not this dialectic is illusory.

Although reason is supposed to secure the unity of the subjective conditions of cognition,

> a completely different situation arises when reason is applied to the objective synthesis of appearances. For in this domain, however, it may endeavor to establish its principle of unconditioned unity, and though it indeed does so with great though illusory appearance of

> success, it soon falls into such contradictions that it is constrained, in this cosmological field, to desist from any such pretensions (CPR, A406-7/B433).

The famous Kantian antinomies are four in number: whether the world has a beginning or not, whether the world is infinitely divisible or not, whether there is causality or not, whether there is a creator or not. For each antinomy, Kant sets forth a thesis and an antithesis. Then he proceeds to "solve" them. I will briefly consider only the first antinomy in order to examine how Kant's thought proceeds. (The other three antinomies follow a similar procedure; the procedural differences, namely, that the first two antinomies are solved in the negative and the latter two in the positive are unimportant for the present discussion.)

The thesis of the first antinomy reads: "The world has a beginning in time and is also limited as regards space" (CPR, A427/B455). Kant goes on to offer the proof of that thesis. His procedure, which he calls "skeptical," is indirect and consists in *reductio ad absurdum*. That is, Kant does not prove exactly the thesis itself but the impossibility of the opposite, and indirectly, the validity of the thesis. Thus, if one supposes that the world does not have a beginning in time, then no successive synthesis of our understanding of things is possible. Therefore, the world has to have a beginning in time. Similarly, the world has to have space limits, otherwise it is impossible to perceive its synthesis as a whole. Therefore, the world is not infinite, and if it is not infinite, then it has to be finite.

The antithesis of the first antinomy reads: "The world has no beginning, and no limits in space; it is infinite as regards both time and space" (CPR, A427/B455). Kant argues again *ad absurdum*. If the world did have a beginning in time, then there would be some empty time ("*leere Zeit*") in which it is impossible for any thing to appear (CPR, A428/B456). Therefore, the world must have no beginning in time. In the same way, if the world had space limits, this would again create an "empty space" (here Kant reproduces the Newtonian concept of time and space), and the argument would end with a similar conclusion.

In solving the antinomies, Kant first points to their roots. If the antithesis is grounded on *empiricism*, the thesis is grounded on what he calls *dogmatism*. The first remains faithful to what the phenomena suggest. The second tends to go beyond. Dogmatism

(the support of the thesis) has a practical interest which is not difficult to detect: the possibility of grounding morality and religion ("all order in the things constituting the world is due to a primordial being" – CPR, A466/B494). The *theoretical* interest of dogmatism lies with the synthesizing of the chain of conditions in a completed whole (CPR, A468/B496). Finally, there is also a "popularity" interest, namely, that dogmatism would be easily accepted by the understanding, because it would offer the foundation for the advances of the understanding. Empiricism (the support of the antithesis) has analogous *raisons d'être*. If empiricism is not sustainable with reference to the practical interest of reason, it still has advantage with reference to theoretical interest, like the possibility of endless knowledge (CPR, A468/B496). Overall, Kant claims that each position has advantages and disadvantages, each one has equal right to exist, and that "each of the two types of philosophy says more than it knows" (CPR, A472/B500ff.).

Unlike the Hegelian reason, the Kantian reason cannot achieve its goal despite its natural and unavoidable propensity toward system.

> Human reason is by nature architectonic. That is to say, it regards all our knowledge as belonging to a possible system, and therefore allows only such principles as do not at any rate make it impossible for any knowledge that we attain to combine into a system with other knowledge. But the propositions of the antithesis are such a kind that they render the completion of the edifice of knowledge quite impossible (CPR, A474/B502).

The predisposition toward organic unity[70] is a key feature of reason and rational "science is a whole of cognition as a system, not as a mere aggregate" (JL, A215; LL, 630; also MA, A IV; TP2,

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70 The notion of systemicity is especially underscored in the latest Kant research. See P. Guyer, "Organisms and the Unity of Science," in W. Watkins, ed., *Kant and the Sciences* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 259–281, and esp. H.F. Fulda, and J. Stolzenberg, eds., *Architektonik und System in der Philosophie Kants* (Hamburg: Meiner, 2001). In particular, P. König offers a remarkable interpretation of Kant's understanding of systemicity which suggests a much closer proximity to Hegel. See P. König: *Die Selbsterkenntnis der Vernunft und das wahre System der Philosophie bei Kant*, in *ibid.*, pp. 41–52.

183; CJ, Einl. Erste Fassung[71]). Rational science, according to the philosopher, is characterized by "the connection of cognition in a system of mutually related grounds and consequences" (MA, A V; TP2, 184). Kant underscores the difference between an internally articulated system and a mere aggregate. The idea is vital in the subsequent development of the discourse in German idealism. However, the outcome of reason's urge toward system is negative. For Kant, system is possible only with regard to the faculty of knowledge alone, not with regard to the world. Thus, reason cannot accomplish its (ontological) urge. On the one hand, reason by its nature has an inclination toward the one end of the dilemma, "the architectonic interest of reason . . . forms a natural recommendation for the assertion of the thesis" (CPR, A475/B503). On the other hand, reason has no grounds for its claim. The human condition seems like a dead end. If one could abstract from the interest of reason, one would end up in a state of "continuous vacillation."

The contrast in reason's endeavors is created by the entity to which the antinomy refers. It refers to an object which, according to transcendental philosophy, "can be given nowhere save our thoughts" (CPR, A482/B510). Not only does the *a priori* structure of human rationality actively mediate any contact, any approach (*Zugang)* toward the outer world, but also, in this case, there can be no contact at all with the desired object. The stance of transcendental philosophy is that any concept is possible only with respect to possible experience. However, the antinomy refers to something else, namely, the *unconditional totality* of synthesis of the object, whereas every possible experience is always particular, limited, and "in its empirical meaning, the term 'whole' is always comparative. The absolute whole of quantity (the universe), the whole of division, of derivation of the condition of existence in general . . . have nothing to do with any possible experience" (CPR, A483/B511). Therefore, "the solution of these problems can never be found in experience" (CPR, A484/B512).

71 Kant's "First Introduction" is not included in the standard English translation by J.H. Bernard.

Obviously, an empirical answer (that is, if one follows the *antithesis*) can never lead to certainty. Equally, says Kant, not only is the dogmatic answer (the claim of the *thesis*) uncertain, but also it is impossible (CPR, A485, B513). Kant employs a skeptical approach to the issue: each thesis, he claims, is too small for our comprehension, and each antithesis is too big.

The solution to the problem is offered by Transcendental Idealism. Kant stresses the fact that knowledge of objects of possible experience is defined by the cognitive faculties, that is, it includes no necessary claim about the nature of the thing-in-itself. The antinomies, however, refer to that very thing-in-itself. Likewise, human reason commits a mistake when it tries to move beyond its limits and assumes that once the conditioned is given, the whole sequence of conditions is given as well. Reason is not justified in doing so.

> The *appearances* are in their apprehension themselves nothing but an empirical synthesis in space and time, and are given only in *this synthesis*. It does not, therefore, follow, that if the conditioned, in the [field of] appearance, is given, the synthesis which constitutes its empirical condition is given therewith and is presupposed. This synthesis first occurs in the regress, and never exists without it (CPR, A499/B527).

Any conclusion (either negative or positive) about the questions to which the antinomies refer would be possible if the phenomena were identical with the thing-in-itself. However, this is not the case. By identifying the two, it has become possible to prove *both thesis and antithesis*. By pointing to the mistake, it becomes possible to reject both:

> If we regard the two propositions, that the world is infinite in magnitude and that it is finite in magnitude, as contradictory opposites, we are assuming that the world, the complete series of appearances, is a thing-in-itself that remains even if I suspend the infinite or the finite regress in the series of its appearances. If, however, I reject this assumption, or rather this accompanying transcendental illusion, and deny that the world is a thing-in-itself, the contradictory opposition of the two assertions is converted in a merely dialectical opposition. Since the world does not exist in itself, independently of

> the regressive series of my representations, it exists *in itself* neither as an *infinite* whole, nor as a *finite* whole. It exists only in the empirical regress of the series of appearances and is not to be met as something in itself (CPR, A505-6/B533-4).

Kant denies that his conclusions promote skepticism, but he does endorse the skeptical method (CPR, A507/B536). Remembering his initial objective about elevating philosophy to the status of other apodictic sciences, one cannot conclude that philosophy gains the same status after all. Comparing philosophy to mathematics, Kant writes: "Mathematicians speak solely of a *progressus in infinitum*. Philosophers, whose task it is to examine concepts, refuse to accept this expression as legitimate, substituting for it the phrase *progressus in indefinitum*" (CPR, A510-1/B538-9). That is, philosophy by nature cannot be satisfied with the certainty that mathematics generates.

However, to which philosophy does one refer here, to the pre-Kantian traditional philosophy or the philosophy that Kant wants to introduce and to orient toward the subject? The philosopher's objections are addressed against traditional metaphysics, and his conclusions aim at separating what we can know from what we cannot. Kant's position does not reject the advancement of knowledge but the impossibility of metaphysical knowledge or knowledge of the ultimate secrets of the world as such. Philosophical reason proves to be inadequate to cope with this task. The sought answers cannot be found, but they indeed can be given *from the subjective standpoint*. In Kant, philosophy does gain a scientific apodictic status, but it does so to the extent to which it is turned into subjective theory of knowledge. By the former sense, Kant renounces traditional metaphysics; by the latter, he upholds metaphysics by reducing them to epistemology.

It is essential to highlight the following in dichotomy Kant's position: to the extent to which he pursues epistemological certainty, he destroys ontological-metaphysical certainty. Facing the choice between the two, Kant holds onto the epistemological certainty. One may even say that the philosopher sacrifices the one for the sake of other. Yet, the extent to which epistemological certainty ends up resurrecting metaphysical certainty becomes obvious only in the post-Kantian discourse. As I will argue in the

following chapter, Fichte will explicitly call the thing-in-itself a creation of the "I" and will also espouse Kant's epistemological forcefulness. By the same token, instead of solving Kant's dilemma, Fichte will pronounce it a rhetorical one, and thus pave the way for its direct obliteration by Schelling and Hegel. In this way, Shelling and Hegel will explicitly identify epistemological and metaphysical certainty. Not only will they reject the impenetrability of the thing-in-itself, but they will do so for the sake of some "final solution" which they both call the deciphering of God's formula.

In Kant, reason has by nature the predisposition to generalize; it leans toward some fullness (*Vollständigkeit*) of its conclusions and moves from the conditions to the conditioned and the unconditioned. As Kant puts it, reason wrongly supposes that "if *the conditioned is given, the entire sum of conditions, and consequently the absolutely unconditioned* (through which alone the conditioned has been possible) *is also given*" (CPR, A409/B436). This is a *natural* and unavoidable antithesis into which reason falls, for it incessantly attempts to deal with questions that it cannot answer because of the restrictions imposed by the thing-in-itself. The thing-in-itself imposes an unsurpassable "veil of ignorance" about the ultimate nature of the universe. In ontological terms, Kant's answer is realistic. This is the human condition, and there is nothing to do about it. The thing-in-itself seems unshakeable.

In the remaining parts of this chapter, I will argue that Kant's position is ontologically unshakeable but epistemologically vulnerable. When I say "epistemologically", I understand epistemology as historically relative. (As I argued in the previous sections, such understanding to a large extent contradicts Kant's.) I do not necessarily perceive the totality of reason as the totality of the object qua thing-in-itself, but the totality of the object as historically given. From within this historically given totality (the result of the historically shaped human rationality), I come again to challenge the logic of "either-or." My objection refers to the philosopher's attitude toward dialectic, rather than his position toward the thing-in-itself.

Kant's solution rests on that "in the empirical regress we can have *no experience of an absolute limit*, that is, no experience of any condition as being one that *empirically* is absolutely unconditioned." (CPR, A517, B545). If one connects this disjunction to the traditional quests

of metaphysics, then indeed one may not reach absolute limit. The world may be both finite and infinite, neither finite nor infinite, etc. Provided the open nature of cognition, it is obvious that the thing-in-itself is unlikely to be fully seized. In this sense, dialectic remains the logic of illusion. However, if one relates this either/or to the historically given world, the either/or is not unequivocally valid.

In fact, as Kant found it impossible to give answers to the problems of the antinomies themselves, he presented the antinomies as antinomies. The consistency of his presentation (his proofs of each thesis, antithesis and secondary related arguments) has been subjected to endless scrutiny and criticism from a formal logical standpoint, and Kant is more criticized than praised for the layout of his arguments.[72] What must be mentioned is that it is a philosophical short-sightedness not to see a real problem *independently* of any inconsistencies of Kant's exposition.[73] For the underlying concern that brings the antinomies forth has always been the concern of philosophy. It is the concern about the truth of reality and the answer to questions of this kind: for instance, to the question as to whether the world is finite or infinite does not depend on Kant's "good" or "bad" exposition.

The objective of my analysis of Kant's antinomy of reason was neither to see how convincingly or unconvincingly Kant proves his claims, nor to assume a position with regard to his responses, but

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72 For detailed discussions, see S. J. al-Azm, *The Origins of Kant's Arguments in the Antinomies,* Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972; J. Bennet, *Kant's Dialectic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974); W. Malzkorn, *Kants Kosmologie-Kritik: Eine formale Analyze der Antinomielehere,* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1999); V.S. Wike, *Kant's Antinomies of Reason. Their Origin and their Resolution.* (Washington, DC: University Press of America 1982).

73 A well-known example of this approach is found in J. Bennett's *Kant's Dialectic.* Renouncing the division between reason and understanding on the whole, Bennett basically claims that the antinomies are not unavoidable illusions of reason but Kant's own illusion about reason, which (illusion) reason is capable of avoiding. Particular praises notwithstanding, Bennett labels Kant's various arguments (or parts of them) as weak, wrong, bad, poor, not cogent, worse than merely dubious, not making any sense, failure, clumsy, flimsy, hasty, tenuous, not even clearly intelligible, downright invalid, etc.

to assess *the method he uses and expose his relation to dialectics.* I wish to emphasize Kant's underlying assumption: the world is *either* finite *or* infinite, *either* limited *or* unlimited. If the world cannot be finite, then *it has to* be infinite, and *vice versa.*

For the later German idealist philosophers, Hegel in particular, it is formal logical analysis that reveals its *ex definitio* limitations in the antinomies, and Kant is culpable to the extent that he remains faithful to this logic. Any self-consistent formal logical treatment does not and cannot solve the antinomy as such,[74] but *only present it as a contradiction.* Formal logic must reach one of the horns of the dilemma, not both, for according to this discipline nothing can be what it is and at once its opposite: it cannot be A and not-A simultaneously. To the contrary, formal logic claims that "to deny a statement is to affirm another statement, known as the *negation* or *contradictory* of the first."[75] Kant's bases his analysis on such reduction, as we have seen. However, as the same procedure is applicable to both thesis and antithesis of each antinomy, the real question is left unsolved. The first two antinomies end with negative conclusions, the last two with positive, but in each case there are two and mutually excluding (from the standpoint of formal logic) conclusions. To the extent to which one wants to answer the questions put in the antinomies, one must abandon the domain of formal logic and enter the domain of dialectic and contradiction.

Whether Kant formulated his arguments consistently or not, is not the central issue in the antinomies. The central methodological issue concerns his underlying assumption: the world is *either* finite *or* infinite, *either* limited *or* unlimited, etc. If the world cannot be finite, then *it must* be infinite, and *vice versa.* This logical stance,

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74 For positive treatment of the problem qua formal logical impasse, see G. Priest, *Beyond the Limits of Thought* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 85–101. With respect to the development of dialectic in German idealism, see E. Ilyenkov, *Dialectical Logic: Essays on its History and Theory,* trans. H. Campbell (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1979), pp. 74–115.

75 W. Quine, *Methods of Logic* (New York: Henry Hold & Company, 1950), p. 1.

the disjunction "either-or," is what is crucial to have in mind with respect to later developments in German idealism. For in the discussion that followed the first *Critique*, the question soon became whether the world could be *both* finite *and* infinite, infinite insofar as it is finite, and vice versa. As Hegel later argued, it is impossible to have the one concept without the other: the infinite which is just *beyond* the finite is a "bad infinite" and is itself another finite. Analogous objections are applicable to all four antinomies.

With his usual sarcasm, Hegel scorned what he called the Kantian "tenderness" toward things: as Kant wanted to maintain contradiction as a subjective illusion of reason, not as a property of things, he thereby could not solve the antinomies. For Hegel, to the contrary, "the truthful solution would be in the statement that the categories have no truth in themselves, and the Unconditioned of Reason just as little, but that it [truth] lies in the unity of both as concrete, and in that alone."[76]

It is also noteworthy that the distinction between how the world *is*, and what *we* know about it, is minor for pre-Kantian metaphysics, but key for post-Kantian philosophy. In this sense, Hegel's philosophy (as far as it restores metaphysics) is pre-Kantian. While Hegel argues that all is about thought (hence, he is post-Kantian), he also *does* denounce the abovementioned distinction. He restores ontology and metaphysics, for he does talk not only about how the world is *cognizable* but also how the world *is* in its intimate constitution.

Kant says that "if the objects of the sensual world were taken to be the thing-in-itself, and the … natural laws as laws of the thing-in-itself, then contradiction would be unavoidable" (PFM, A 150-51; TP2, 134). He is then trying to "solve" the contradiction, as if it were just a mistake. In this approach, appearance sharply and unconditionally separated from the thing-in-itself and truth has to be *either* absolutely grounded *or* entirely illusory. Understandably, traditional philosophizing was by definition compelled to such strategy. However, this strategy is not necessary after Kant.

Relevant to the above is the issue of the relation of philosophical reason to formal logic. If dialectic is an illusion, then it may

76 Hegel, VGP3, 359; HP3, 451.

well be that formal logic is an illusion, too. Kant does not resolve this quandary. If he offers an explanation, it is in support of formal logic and it is, in my opinion, wrong. Nevertheless, Kant brings forth the conviction that contradictory conclusions in the process of reasoning are natural and unavoidable, that these conclusions are an attribute of human reason, and that the reconciliation becomes possible through *reason*.

V. The Logical Facet: Kant's Relation to Formal Logic and the Problem of Contradiction

Let me now turn directly to what is central for the current investigation, the problem of formal logic and its relationship to identity and contradiction. Kant's approach to these notions, in my view, is characterized by dramatic ambiguities, and it combines challenge and defiance with conformity and obedience.

An early expression of discontent with the principles of formal logic is met in Kant's *New Elucidation of the First Principles of Metaphysical Cognition* (1755). In that work Kant articulates a mild skepticism about the way the principle of contradiction is expressed. Not challenging the principle itself, he is clearly doubtful of its cognitive effectiveness. Although in formal logic the principle of non-contradiction comes in tandem with the principle of identity, Kant contrasts the two by casting doubt on the problem of transition from a claim to its opposite. He finds it impossible to prove the expression "if something is true, then its opposite is false" or "if the opposite of something is true, then this something is false." According to Kant, such a claim can only be presupposed (NE, 411; TP1, 7). What one can ascertain is the following: if something is, then it is, and if something is not, then it is not. These are two contradictory claims that are laid side by side as mutually acceptable, but not deduced from one another. Therefore, there must exist not one absolute first ground-sentence of all truths, but two – one positive, and one negative (NE, 409, 413; TP1, 6, 7). Easy to discern, this is still the law of identity, but it has a positive and negative definition, and to this law Kant expresses clear preference comparing it to the law of non-contradiction. In his own words, he wants to establish

"securely the priority of the principle of identity over that of contradiction in the hierarchy of truths" (NE, 419; TP1, 9). As of the law of contradiction, Kant finds it "impossible that something is and is not" (NE, 419; TP1, 10) for "opposed concepts annul each other" (NE, 417; TP1, 9). If one denotes one claim as +A and its opposite as −A, then +A−A=0. This is an idea that will prove to be useful in Kant's later explorations.

A more challenging elaboration of the concerns of the *Elucidation* was advanced in Kant's *Attempt to Introduce the Concept of Negative Magnitudes into Philosophy (Weltweisheit)* that was published in 1763.[77] Kant turns now to the contradiction between form and content of truth claims and respectively juxtaposes their formal logical validity to their ontological status. As it has already been mentioned, his concern was to find a way of logically dealing with reality, full of change, opposition, and contradiction. This is the guesswork that underlines Kant's treatise: "how should I understand that because something is, something else is" and "because something is, something else is sublated" (ATT, A68, A71; TP1, 239, 241). Departing from this concern, he questions the effectiveness and cognitive authority of the law of identity in philosophical discourse and launches an assault against traditional metaphysics: if metaphysics upholds the law of identity, then it is unable to explain the transition to difference, contradiction, and *vice versa*. If the case were only about identity, Kant maintains, then it would be about the analysis of one and the same thing, and it would be impossible to explain how one thing produces another thing, distinct from the first.

In the *Attempt*, Kant distinguishes two types of opposition, logical and real. Logical opposition consists of the contradiction of affirming and denying one and the same predicate, something which would make no sense. Real opposition is that of accepting opposing tendencies that can be ascribed to one and the same subject. While one has to renounce the logical opposition, real opposition is undeniable; and the latter is what Kant seeks to philosophically

77 For some good discussion of this work, see E. Cassirer, *Das Erkenntnisproblem in der Philosophie und Wissenschaft der Neueren Zeit. Zweiter Band,* pp. 498ff; M. Wolff M. *Der Begriff des Widerspruchs. Eine Studie zur Dialektik Kants und Hegels* (Königstein/Ts.: Hein, 1981), p. 62ff.

articulate. In order to do that, Kant appeals to the use of negative magnitudes in mathematics and endeavors to transfer the same scheme into philosophical reasoning by interpreting the negative magnitude "in a positive way." The idea is that a negative magnitude, say –A, is not by itself negative but is rather the negation of something positive, namely, of A. "Negative magnitudes," Kant argues, are thus not formal logical contradictions, but negations "on positive grounds." Interpreting then real oppositions on such "positive grounds," it becomes possible to treat the negative not as merely negative but as a *negatively understood positive* and vice versa. By the same token one can maintain that any negative outcome on the one edge of each opposition is a positive outcome on the other edge of the same opposition. There is no contradiction, for instance, in that one and the same person has simultaneously 8 units of capital and -8 units of debt. In the same way, Kant maintains, retreat on the one end of an opposition is a negative advance (or the advance of the other end of the opposition), falling is a positive rising, hate is a negative love. Heat must be counterbalanced by cold, upward movement by downward movement, and so on. Kant calls "descent a negative rise, falling a negative rising, retreat a negative progress."[78] These are just some of the examples that Kant employs, while his examination expands from metaphysics to moral philosophy,[79] to psychology, etc.

Real opposition occurs when two conflicting determinations are ascribed to one and the same subject but not as contradictory predicates in the formal logical sense for in such case the opposition would be a logical one and, thus, impossible. Kant here follows Aristotle.[80] Further, real opposition occurs only when one of the opposing tendencies is negative and the other positive so that

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78 "das Untergehen ein negatives Aufgehen, Fallen ein negatives Steigen, Zurückgehen eins negatives Fortkommen" (ATT, A12, TP1, 215).

79 "Vice (demeritum) is not simply a negation (*Verneinung*) but a negative virtue (*meritum negativum*)" (ATT, A26; TP1, 221).

80 Aristotle says that it would be paradoxical to ascribe contradictory predicates to things for in such a case one would be simultaneously brave and coward, right and wrong, etc. («*αλλ΄ουν το γε τανάντια υπάρχειν αυτοίς παντελώς άτοπον αν δοξείν είναι*»). See *Topics,* Z 150^{a}, 9–11.

they "negate each other and their consequences" (ATT, A5, A13; TP1, 211, 215) in the same way that in mathematics A – A = 0. Elaborating here the idea used in the *New Elucidation*, Kant's argument points to the existence of a certain ontological constant: each tendency in an object is counterbalanced by another one opposed to the first, so that an ontological equilibrium is eventually maintained. Thus, acknowledging the reality of contradictions, Kant reduces them to a Leibnizian pre-established harmony where each one negates the other. As the universe is set on ontological symmetry in which all changes toward one direction are counterbalanced by changes in the opposite direction, the overall state of affairs "neither increases, nor decreases" (ATT, A51; TP1, 232). If one could add and subtract all changes caused by opposing forces, the result would equal zero (0). The real world, then, loses its ontological sufficiency; it becomes "in itself nothing, except insofar as it is something in virtue of the will of another" (ATT, A56; TP1, 234). Such will for Kant is the divine will, which makes the world something positive.

The above might create the impression that Kant's arguments are close to those of Hegel.[81] Although Kant employs a number of terms to unpack the concept of real opposition (such as *Repugnanz*, and *Widerstreit*) and uses the term contradiction (*Widerspruch*) only to denote formal logical contradiction, one may still presume that the negative magnitudes in the form of real oppositions are nothing else but, ontologically speaking, real contradictions as the constitutive makeup of all being. Further, by bringing into play opposition to explain change, Kant confines the use of the law of identity. The *logical* ground of explaining things, he claimed, can make use of the law of identity, but this law is inapplicable to the *real* ground of their existence (ATT, A68; TP1, 239). Thus, the law of identity is suitable for the domain of formal operations; yet, if applied not only to the form but also to the content of knowledge, then change, the transition from one thing to another, and the sublation of one thing by another cannot be explained. Finally, one can recognize the proximity of Kant's analysis to the Hegelian

81 For a defense of this position, see M. Wolff, *Der Begriff des Widerspruchs*, pp. 62–78.

phenomenological absolute which, in Hegel's famous expression, is itself in rest while being in unrest.

All these similarities are only exoteric. Although Kant does admit that opposing tendencies may be ascribed to one subject, he was not himself clear as to their ontological function. If only the latter is *assumed*, one can see Kant as anticipating Hegel. But what Kant himself concludes is precisely the opposite from Hegel, namely, that the opposites annul each other and the subject is thus self-identical. Hegel, to the contrary, will forcefully argue that the consistent advance of opposition necessarily leads to contradiction, indeed, as internal contradiction, not as external opposition. For Hegel, contradictions do not simply annul each other and result in zero but, to the contrary, grant vitality and movement to one and the same thing. This thing is one and the same because it is the same and different from itself. As of the Hegelian God, this is nowhere to be found beyond the world, but is self-negated in the world. Hegel's Absolute is not only tormented by contradictions but, as he writes in the *Phenomenology*, is in "absolute dismemberment" ("*absolute Zerrissenheit*")[82] in the real world.

Recapitulating Kant's pre-critical position, it can be said that along with *de facto* acknowledging the reality of opposition and contradiction, the patriarch of German idealism repudiates the effectiveness of formal logic in dealing with this fact and points to the inability of formal logic to reach true *knowledge* of things. Whenever such an attempt is made on the basis of formal logic, contradictions are inevitable. Anticipating his position in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant also points here to the inevitable "fallibility" that is found in the "finitude of human nature" (ATT, A68; TP1, 240). Moreover, by challenging the cognitive effectiveness of formal logic, he points to the possibility of a non-formal logic of cognition.

Such non-formal logic is presented in the philosopher's critical writings, in which Kant famously separates ordinary (general) logic from transcendental and admits that "the mere form of knowledge . . . is far from being sufficient to determine

82 Hegel, PG, 36; PS, 19.

the material (objective) truth of knowledge" (CPR, A60/B85). Formal logic pertains to the form of expression and in no way to the content of knowledge "in respect to objects" (JL, A7; LL, 529). Faithful to his pre-critical concerns, the author of the *Critique of Pure Reason* also complains that general logic "which is merely a *canon* of judgment has been employed as if it were an *organon* for the actual production of at least the semblance of objective assertions, and has thus been misapplied" (CPR, A61/B85). It is only contemporary formal logic that denies involvement in the domains of truth, although it is worth mentioning that such denial is far from being unequivocal (e.g., in Neopositivism, and not only[83]. However, our concern here is whether Kant himself, despite his protest, is clear on what the *canon* of thought is as distinct from the *organon*.

For the critical philosopher, "general logic can supply no rules for judgment" (CPR, A135/B174). Its role is that of subsuming the particular under the universal and of validating its correspondence. At the same time, Kant maintains that there must be a logic that does not abstract from content and launched the transcendental logic as "the logic of truth" (CPR, A62/B87). Transcendental logic appears thus as a second-order logic, a *metalogic*, which is supposed to examine the principles that lay the foundation of cognition. The latter is constituted by the categories, the concepts intended to be universal and necessary schemas or codes that link ideas together. The categories are thus *conditio sine qua non* of all thinking. As, according to Kant, we cannot think an object save through categories, any act of thinking, any judgment, necessarily involves these concepts as its noematic background. Evald Ilyenkov is extremely insightful when he notes that "it is Kant, not Hegel (as it is usually thought and said) who saw the main essence of logic in categorical definitions of knowledge, and began to understand logic primarily as the systematic exposition of categories, universal and necessary concepts characterizing an object in general, those very concepts that were traditionally considered the monopoly of metaphysical

83 Cf. the very first phrase in the introduction of W. Quine's *Methods of Logic:* "Logic, like any science, has as its business the pursuit of truth" (Quine, *op. cit.,* p. xi).

investigations."[84] Hegel himself admitted this fact by saying that it was Kant who first transformed metaphysics into logic.

There must be, therefore, a specific logic for philosophical discourse, the logic of categories, and this is an issue that became of tremendous importance for post-Kantian German idealism. As Robert Pippin writes, "all Kant seems to mean … is the suggestion that, just as there must be 'higher order' rules of logic which define the possible relations of representation, considered formally, so we might 'expect' that there must be '*a priori*' rules for *any* synthesis of representations."[85] The question, then, is how to think in terms of this newly formed logic, what its *modus operandi* is, and how it is related to formal logic[86] and to contradiction. Kant presents us with all the ingredients: he put the question, pointed at the limitation of the law of identity, and discussed the problem of contradiction.

> *The principle of contradiction* must … be recognized as being the universal and sufficient *principle of all analytic knowledge*; but beyond the sphere of analytic knowledge it has, as a *sufficient* criterion of truth, no authority and no application (CPR, A151/B191).

According to Kant, the principle of contradiction is a universal but "negative" criterion of truth. However, in synthetic cognition, one can get no positive information from that principle, and general (formal) logic has nothing to do with synthetic cognition (CPR, A154/B193ff.). One might possibly conclude that in synthetic

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84 E.V. Ilyenkov, *Dialectical Logic,* p. 95.

85 R. Pippin, *Kant's Theory of Form,* p. 101.

86 A frequently met explanation, in both older and recent commentaries, is that while formal logic is concerned with the necessary rules pertinent to *all thinking,* transcendental logic is a particular kind of logic that studies only the rules of synthetic *a priori* thinking. A well-known reading of this sort is H.J. Paton, *Kant's Metaphysics of Experience* (New York: Humanities Press, 1936), pp. 222–235; For recent reformulations of the same, see Ötfried Höffe, *Kants Kritik der reinen Vernunft,* (München: C.H. Beck, 2003), pp. 117–122; M. Wolff, „Der Begriff des Widerspruchs in der „*Kritik der reinen Vernunft*"", in B. Tuschling, ed., *Probleme der „Kritik der reinen Vernunft*" (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1984), pp. 178–202.

cognition contradiction is acceptable or that synthetic cognition is cognition which combines within it (the synthesis of) contradictory counterparts. Kant does not occupy a positive stance on this issue, but it is clear that synthetic cognition is the act of the transcendental self, of the cognizing consciousness.

> Experience rests on a synthetic unity of appearances, that is, a synthesis according to concepts of an object of appearances in general. Apart from such synthesis it would not be knowledge, but a rhapsody of perceptions that would not fit into any context according to rules of a completely interconnected (possible) consciousness (CPR, A156/B195).

Kant here exposes the foundation of the dialectic of mind. As Hegel later saw it, mind's *modus operandi* is that it is capable of simultaneously combining all contradictory concepts which formal logic treats as separate and unrelated. All concepts of Kant's Transcendental Analytic, the categories, schemas, axioms, anticipations of perception, analogies and postulates, the concepts of the Amphiboly (strikingly resembling the categories of Hegel's *Wesenslogik*) are meant to serve that purpose: they are all dialectical pairs within one and the same mind, one consciousness. In Hegel's famous example, the simple empirical judgment "the rose is red" invokes simultaneously two contradictory categories, the particular and the universal: the particular *is* universal.

However, Kant does not reach such a conclusion. For him, an object and how the mind thinks about that object remain two separate issues. For Hegel, they are not. Drawn by the ontological distinction between subject and object, phenomenal and noumenal worlds, Kant, despite his criticism, finds it possible to repudiate the centrality of contradiction in logic. Thus, the concepts of the Transcendental Analytic are presented by Kant as self-sufficient units, as "pigeonholes" (*Fächern*, in Hegel's later language game) without explanation of the necessity of their selection[87] and arrangement, their dialectical character, and their interconnections.

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87 To this extent, Kant is also vulnerable to analytic criticism. See the discussion in P.F. Strawson, *The Bounds of Sense,* pp. 74–82. For example, Strawson wonders (pp. 79–80) why some concepts deserve the name 'categories' while others do not.

In the Transcendental Dialectic, Kant's position becomes even more intricate as the entire investigation unfolds around the idea of contradiction. Admitting the natural character of the dialectic of reason, Kant implicitly admits the dialectical nature of reality as it is given to the historical subject. He makes it clear that thought struggles with contradictions and that these are an inevitable aspect of knowledge. For Kant, dialectic is "natural" and "unavoidable" (CPR, A298/B354-5), and both Schelling and Hegel[88] will see in that the great contribution of Kantian philosophy. Kant even calls dialectic «*καθαρκτικόν*» of the understanding (CPR, A53/B78; JL, A12; LL, 532). However, instead of traversing dialectic into the categories of the understanding, where dialectic really belongs, the philosopher does the opposite: he renounces the reality of dialectic, repeatedly calls dialectic "the logic of illusion" (CPR, A62/B85-6; A293-4/B350; JL, A11; LL, 531), not of reality, and calls the antithetic of reason a "transcendental illusion" (A293/B350ff.). It must be once again noted that Kant's task is a destructive one, namely, the annihilation of previous metaphysics. It is unambiguous that if reason is meant to address only traditional metaphysical questions, then its dialectic cannot be but illusory.[89] In that sense, Kant writes that systematic unity (as a mere idea) is only a *projected* unity (CPR, A647/B675). The real problem, however, is what happens when the unity is not "metaphysical" and "unconditioned."

Kant admits the central role of contradiction when reason attempts to deal with the unconditioned:

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88 Hegel, WL1, 52; SL, 56.

89 M. Grier in her K*ant's Doctrine of Transcendental Illusion* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) argues that Kant, by separating transcendental illusions from mere logical fallacies, and by insisting on the inevitability of transcendental illusions, intends to secure the effective use of reason for the systematic unity of the understanding alone. In that latter sense, Grier argues, Kant rather reintroduces a Platonic archetype theory of knowledge. Grier's insight is profound, but the comparison with Plato is questionable. If this were the case, then the use of reason would become constitutive. Even with regard to the functions of the understanding, reason cannot but introduce a regulative unity because the thing-in-itself is unknowable. If reason has constitutive functions, then Kant's position relapses into traditional metaphysics.

> on the supposition that our empirical knowledge conforms to objects as things in themselves, we find that the unconditioned cannot be thought without contradiction … on the other hand, [if] we suppose that our representation of things, as they are given to us, does not conform to these things as they are in themselves, but that these objects as appearances, conform to our mode of representation, the contradiction vanishes (CPR, BXX).

At first, the philosopher accepts the inevitability of contradictions. If one sees things "in themselves," then the only way to comprehend them is to see them as internally contradictory. However, Kant insists that the contradiction arises only if reason deals with the supersensible. If one turns the focus away from the supersensible, then the contradiction disappears. *The ontological facet lets Kant discard the logical facet, the dialectic.* He claims thus that he employs general logic not as *organon*, but as a "*critique of dialectical illusion*" (CPR, A62/B86). In such understanding, however, dialectic and contradiction are by definition pronounced as illusion.

Already in his pre-critical period, Kant demonstrates a cautious stance toward formal logic. However, he never *directly* challenges its principles. His position in the *Critique of Pure Reason* remains the same. Not only does he take mathematics and physics as samples of science proper, but he is also firmly attached to formal logic, convinced of its utterly scientific nature: "That logic has already, from the earliest times, proceeded upon this sure path is evident by the fact that since Aristotle it has not required to retrace a single step" (CPR, B VIII). In his *Logic*, one of his last works, Kant repeats: "There are only few Sciences that have reached such a strong condition from where they can no more be modified. To these belong Logic and also Metaphysics"[90] (JL, A18; LL, 534).

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90 Kant's *Logic* was published in 1800. The usually humble Kant underscores here his epistemological assertiveness and claims here that metaphysics has been perfected because of his own contribution. The relation of his own critical examination to previous metaphysics is compared to the relation of chemistry to alchemy or of astronomy to astrology (PFM, A199; TP2, 154).

Not only does Kant hold the general logic in high esteem, he also mobilizes it to explain the illusory nature of dialectic. The "correct use of reason and understanding in general," the "laws of thought," are those of formal logic. Here is how he relates reason to formal logic:

> With regard not to mere form but to content, logic is an *a priori* rational science of the necessary laws of thought, not in relation to certain objects, but all objects in general; it is thus a science of the correct use of understanding and reason in general, not subjective, i.e., according to empirical (psychological) principles, how the understanding thinks, but objective, that is, according to *a priori* principles, how the understanding ought to think (JL, A9-10; LL, 531).

The specification "with regard not to mere form but to content" is understandable, and Kant had already advanced it in his pre-critical period. However, the issue of the content of knowledge can no more be abandoned for transcendental logic as metalogic *is* the unification of form and content. Kant is aware of this quandary. But despite his criticism of formal logic, he remains firmly attached to it.

In sum, Kant puts forward the challenge, but does not resolve the logical problem. However, the challenge will be strengthened in the subsequent development of German idealism. Beginning with the dissolution of the thing-in-itself by Fichte, the validity of contradictions will be gradually revisited. Fichte and Schelling will attempt to solve the Kantian antinomies in a way that will be logically innovative, but will also lead to the restoration of pre-Kantian metaphysics in Schelling and Hegel. Hegel will move to the other extreme. Not only will he spread dialectic into the categories, but he will also make the assertion to have found answers to reason's metaphysical quests.

Hegel's grandiose system does not appear out of nowhere. Rather than finding its conception in Hegel's head alone, his system is the outcome of preceding philosophical discussions. Its momentous advance consists in the fact that he uniquely weaves together and embellishes the tapestry of these discussions. To that extent, Fichte's appropriation of Kant, to which I will now turn, is critical.

CHAPTER TWO

FROM EPISTEMOLOGY TO METAPHYSICS: FICHTE AND SCHELLING

I. Fichte: The Thing-in-Itself and the Dialectical Leap

Fichte departs from the ambiguities of Kantian dualism. Although Kant had defended the twofoldness of human agency, its natural and intelligible nature, he provided no convincing way to unite the spheres of theoretical and practical knowledge, let alone natural-scientific and moral action. Without such unity, the reality of practical reason is questionable, especially in light of the progress of naturalism. Likewise, Kant's treatment of the problem of freedom in the third antinomy left his followers dissatisfied. Humans do not abide only in the intelligible world of freedom, but also (and primarily) in the natural world, in which Kant concedes absolute necessity. In the immediate post-Kantian discussion, the notion of freedom became the axis of philosophical inquiry.[1]

The original duplicity of human agency is Fichte's "basic anthropological presupposition"[2] and, simultaneously, the point of departure from which a unified theory of subjectivity is to be derived. Fichte's move is undertaken on the basis of the Kantian primacy of the practical over the theoretical reason. He transcends the limits between the two by expanding the nomothetic rights of the former in the realm of the latter. Radicalizing the autonomy of practical reason, Fichte established himself as a

1 For a detailed discussion of this shift see A. Nuzzo, "Transformations of Freedom in the Jena Kant Reception (1785–94)," in *The Owl of Minerva*, 32:2 (Spring 2001), pp. 135–67.

2 On the "dividedness of the human condition" which unites the often overlooked "existential and scientific tasks of philosophy," see D. Breazeale, "Philosophy and the Divided Self: On the 'existential' and 'scientific' tasks of the Jena *Wissenschaftslehre*," in *Fichte Studien*, vol. 6, 1994, pp. 117–47.

dominant philosopher of freedom,[3] insisting that being equals being "through freedom" (EVW, 14). In an often quoted letter to Reinhold, Fichte conceded that his entire system was from the beginning to the end a mere analysis this concept. However, does the centrality of the question of freedom in Fichte's philosophy exhaust his originality? The emphasis on moral action and free will should not overshadow the logical and epistemological innovation, which constitutes Fichte's most substantial philosophical contribution and the most radical departure from Kant. For the purpose of the current investigation, I shall emphasize that the Fichtean theoretical "I" is not only procedural (mediating the transition to practical philosophy[4]), but also constitutes, in itself, an essential epistemological advance.

Fichte's works are marked with freshness and passion. Not only are they lively, but, above all, they are *methodologically* innovative. In that sense, his contribution to the evolution of German idealism is notably underestimated. He introduces original and radically new insights into the post-Kantian discourse; and a whole series of ideas that are typically attributed to Hegel, such as those of

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3 Characteristic is the approach of Alexis Philonenko. See A. Philonenko, *La liberté humaine dans la philosophie de Fichte* (Paris: Vrin, 1966). On Fichte's concept of freedom, see also P.P. Gaidenko, *Paradoxy Svobody v Uchenii Fichte* [*Paradoxes of Freedom in Fichte's Doctrine*] (Moskva: Nauka, 1990).

4 According to the standard interpretation, what Fichte attempted to show is that self-positing is necessary for practical subjectivity and his theoretical inquiry was meant to ground his *Sittenlehre*. See, for example, P. Baumanns, *Fichtes ursprüngliches System. Sein Standort zwischen Kant und Hegel* (Stuttgart: Frommann-Holzboog, 1972); F. Neuhouser, *Fichte's Theory of Subjectivity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); A. Wood, "The 'I' as Practical Philosophy," in S. Sedgwick, ed., *The Reception of Kant's Critical Philosophy. Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 93–108. For specific treatment of the meaning of a "system" in respect to the unity of theoretical and practical reason, see A. Nuzzo, "The Unity of Philosophy in Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre Nova Methodo*, 1798–9," in D. Breazeale, and T. Rockmore, eds., *New Essays on Fichte's Later Jena* Wissenschaftslehre (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2002), pp. 157–74.

contradiction, totality, activity and practical nature of consciousness, were profoundly explored by Fichte. As the widely accepted attitude has it, one reads Fichte "in order to make sense of Hegel." In fact, one must read Fichte in order to understand how much Hegel owes to Fichte.[5]

I will begin this section by emphasizing Fichte's epistemological advance, and only at the end will I return to challenge his notorious overstatement of the subjective side of cognition.

A. *The Notion of a Philosophical Science and its Relation to Logic*

Fichte advertises his philosophy as a continuation of Kant's doctrine, which Fichte claims to have alone properly understood. Endorsing the claims of critical philosophy, he is convinced that:

> no human understanding can advance further than that boundary on which Kant, especially in the *Critique of Judgment,* stood, and which he declared to be the final boundary of finite knowing – but without ever telling us specifically where it lies. I realize that I will never be able to say anything which has not already – directly or indirectly and with more or less clarity – been indicated by Kant (UBW, 30; CCW, 95–6).

Fichte's fundamental (and unavoidable, as he admits) source and inspiration is Kant's transcendental philosophy, and the philosopher makes it clear that he develops the Kantian undertaking. At the same time, Fichte is engaged in an overall independent project, offering his own original insights and elaborations. The closeness to Kant is combined with dramatic departures that

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5 Hegel's appropriation of Kant was "everywhere influenced by Fichte's reading of central issues and unresolved problems in Kant." See R. Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism: The Satisfactions of Self-Consciousness.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 42; N. Hartmann, *Die Philosophie des Deutschen Idealismus* (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1960), p. 278; This contention is frequently made in Fichte research, especially in the works of W. Hartrkopf, R. Lauth, and more recently W. Martin, T.M. Seebohm, and others (see my discussion below).

result, as G. Zöller successfully puts it, in "a precarious balance between loyalty and patricide."[6]

In short, Fichte claims that he alone has properly understood Kant and firmly defends his Kantianism against the criticism of the *Wissenschaftslehre:* "I have long asserted, and repeat once more, that my system is nothing other than the *Kantian;* this means that it contains the same view of things." Although he admits the general authority of Kant over his system, Fichte is nonetheless quick to add that his philosophy "is in method quite independent of the *Kantian* … My writings seek neither to explain *Kant* nor to be explained by him; they stand on their own, and *Kant* does not come into it at all" (EEW, 420–1; FIS, 4).

The Kantian system left the author of the *Wissenschaftslehre* unconvinced as to whether philosophy has obtained a solid scientific status. Under the influence of skeptical attacks against Kant (I shall discuss these at the end of the section), Fichte interprets Kant's system as a philosophical propaedeutic to science, rather than a system of scientific cognition *per se.* At the same time, Fichte is convinced that absolute certainty is possible and that "philosophy is a *science*" (UBW 38; CCW, 101) that must be characterized by systemicity, all-inclusiveness, clarity, and precision. Thus, he reproduces the scientific ambitions of Kant. Characteristically calling his system *Wissenschaftslehre* (Doctrine of Science), Fichte is confident that he has found the way to elevate philosophy to the rank of complete science.

In order to warrant the scientific status of a discipline, Fichte writes, this discipline must be distinguished by the inclusion of all its propositions in a unified whole: "A science possesses systematic form. All the propositions of a science are joined together in a single first principle, in which they unite to form a whole" (UBW, 38; see also 40, 47, 48, 59, etc.). Adopting Reinhold's idea, Fichte perceives the exposition of the scientific system in the form of propositions, the unity of which must be based on a presupposed first principle, a *Grundsatz.* "*Every science requires a first principle*" (UBW, 41, 47; CCW, 104, 107) or first proposition, the truthfulness

6 G. Zöller, *Fichte's Transcendental Philosophy. The Original Duplicity of Intelligence and Will* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), p. 11.

of which must be beyond question. From that initial proposition one may proceed to the next one, and so on, and thus build a system. Given formally correct inferences, the unconditioned validity of the first principle *ipso facto* corroborates the unity between that principle and the system grounded thereupon.

> A first principle has been exhausted when a complete system has been erected upon it, that is, when the principle in question necessarily leads to *all* of the propositions which are asserted and when *all* of these propositions necessarily lead us back to the first principle (UBW, 58; CCW, 116).

The proposed procedure is common to both philosophy as well as any other discipline. However, along with this resemblance between philosophy and the other sciences, Fichte also stresses the privileged level of philosophy proper. Where ordinary sciences merely abstract from their object by using principles, philosophy reflects upon the nature of those principles themselves. Philosophy, or *Wissenschaftslehre*, is, in Fichte's grasp, a meta-science, a universal in nature discipline that is meant to provide the fundamental and unequivocally applicable principles for all domains of rigorous knowledge. Therefore, philosophy as science requires a principle that is supposed to ground the mere possibility of cognition *per se*, "the absolutely unconditioned first principle of all human knowledge" (GGW, 91; FES, 93). The first principle of philosophy, then, must be one that is "absolutely certain; that is, it is certain, *because* it is certain; it provides the foundation of all certainty" (UBW, 48; CCW, 108).

Fichte's approach demands the phenomenological "bracketing," the *αποχή* from any particular content and the examination of what it is to have a principle, to have knowledge, to have a system. As the inquiry able to answer the meta-questions about the principles of science, philosophy is then "*the science of science as such*" (UBW, 43, 45, 46, 55; CCW, 105, 106,107, 114; etc.). By expressing reason's inherent systematic nature and by pertaining to the totality of human knowledge, philosophy as scientific system must be self-sufficient and grounded on its own. "If science is certain that it is science, then it has an absolute and unchanged evidence in its own self, which absolutely nullifies the possibility

of its opposite as well as all doubts" (BBW: 376ff.). Therefore, the object of scientific philosophy is the complete "system of human knowledge" (UBW, 70; CCW, 125) *per se* or the system of *any* possibility of human knowledge.

Thus, philosophy is posited at the level of an examination of the general forms of knowledge and portrays it as offering the frame to which all other inquires must conform. However, if philosophy is a general logic of cognition, then a question arises about the relationship between philosophy and traditional logic. Addressing this issue, Fichte arrives at a position which is momentous for the later development of German idealism. According to the "ordinary opinion," he writes, it is the task of traditional logic to offer the form to the inquiries of particular sciences (UBW, 56, 66; CCW, 115, 122). In this respect, philosophy is an examination of the logical principles of knowledge. As Fichte puts it in his *Über das Verhältnis der Logik zur Philosophie oder transzendentale Logik,* logic and philosophy "both have one object, they are knowledge about knowledge, but still, they have different views of that same object" (UVL, 105). The title of that work shows that philosophy is, on the one hand, distinguished from general logic and, on the other hand, identical to transcendental logic. That is, philosophy is logic, albeit not general (formal) logic. Unlike formal logic, philosophy is not confined to a formal set of research rules. It is rather the examination of the possibility of those rules themselves. Whereas formal logic operates as an abstraction from any given content, philosophy is *reflection* upon that abstraction (UBW, 67). Thus, philosophy is a mode of "synthetic thought." The object of philosophical abstraction is the abstraction of logic. Therefore, the form that logic extracts is the content of philosophical reflection. Thus, in philosophy, form and content, as well as abstraction and reflection, "are both one and the same activity" (UBW, 68). The one is not possible without the other[7] and philosophy is broader and more fundamental than logic. Fichte strikingly calls this latter "not a philosophical science at all" (UBW, 67; CCW, 123).

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7 W.S. Hartkopf, "Die Dialektik Fichtes als Vorstufe zu Hegels Dialektik," in *Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung* 21 (1967), Heft 2, p. 183ff.

> The former does not *provide the foundation* for the latter; it is, instead, the latter which provides the foundation for the former. The *Wissenschaftslehre* simply cannot be deduced from logic. Prior to the *Wissenschaftslehre*, one may not presuppose the validity of a single proposition of logic – including the law of contradiction. On the contrary, every logical proposition and logic in its entirety must be deduced from the *Wissenschaftslehre*. We have to show that the forms which are established within logic really are the forms of a particular content within the *Wissenschaftslehre*. Logic, therefore, derives its validity from the *Wissenschaftslehre*, but the validity of the latter is not derived from the former (UBW, 68; CCW, 124–5).

Philosophy's supremacy and command over formal logic is clear and impressive. The former reflects upon and defines the latter. Even with respect to what seems to be the nucleus of proper thinking, the law of non-contradiction, *this law is given to logic by the Wissenschaftslehre*. Logic itself neither arrives at nor reflects upon such a rule. It just "freely applies" the rule. One may discern here the replica of the Kantian principle of freedom as the primary attribute of reason. However, Fichte is simultaneously searching for *necessity*, necessity which must be demonstrated at a higher level by the *Wissenschaftslehre*. As he puts it, "all that distinguishes the *Wissenschaftslehre* from other sciences is this: the object of these other sciences is itself a free act, whereas the object of the *Wissenschaftslehre* is a set of necessary acts" (UBW, 72; CCW, 127). Whereas the *Wissenschaftslehre* is meant to express some "necessary" intersubjective laws of rationality, "logic is an artificial product of the freedom of the human mind." Whereas the *Wissenschaftslehre* is the "exclusive condition" of knowledge and all sciences, logic is a means of their improvement, "a highly beneficial device for securing and facilitating scientific progress" (UBW, 69; CCW, 124).

The objectivity of knowledge that the *Wissenschaftslehre* is supposed to provide is not to be confused with *Fichte's* account of the *Wissenschaftslehre*. From a subjective point of view, it is possible that one may follow another path, invoke different presuppositions, and apply other means of proof to reach truth. Such a path, however, would not harm the *Wissenschaftslehre* as such, but only Fichte's exposition of the *Wissenschaftslehre*. Any improved *version* of knowledge does not harm the *objectivity* of

knowledge, it only overcomes a previous, less adequate version of knowledge. Emphasizing the subjective limitations of any possible cognition, Fichte admits that "one may never claim infallibility" (UBW, 76; CCW, 130). Mistakes, errors, and imperfections are due to the human factor, not to the system, not to the way knowledge *per se* should be. Ideally, the system of the *Wissenschaftslehre* as meta-science *must* be all-inclusive, infallible, and perfect.

By positioning *Wissenschaftslehre* at the metalevel of discourse (metalogic, metascience, metaknowledge), Fichte aims to attain a vantage point that would justify unqualified cognitive objectivity. The philosopher searches into the mere possibility of the logical from a metalogical level, into knowledge as knowledge of knowledge, and logic as logic of logic. His position is parallel to Kant's differentiation between pure and applied logic. Philosophy proper is supposed to examine the objectivity of the subjective, no matter how correct the subjective seems. The philosopher asks: How can we learn that $5 \times 9 = 45$ and not 36? The question itself already implies the existence of a given rule of inference, but it is the rule that is the object of the meta-analysis of the *Wissenschaftslehre*. For the latter is by definition positioned beyond the subjective, as a verification of the subjective.

At this point, Fichte falls into a circle, one of the many that he concedes in his texts. The mere examination of the subjective requires the subjective; the search cannot be carried out otherwise, as the *Wissenschaftslehre* "is not merely a rule, but it is at the same time the calculation" (UBW, 75; CCW, 129).

It seems then that the meta-rules of judgment borrowed from what is being judged, and, in such case, objectivity is unattainable. The *Wissenschaftslehre* is meant to provide an exposition of the human mind in a systematic manner and to portray the necessary laws of thinking that pertain to all finite reason. Fichte's intent is to expose the objective validity of rationality, which should not depend on the human factor and its imperfection. For men are "not the legislators of the human mind, but rather its historiographers" (CCW, 131; UBW, 77). However, the historiography of spirit is not the same as spirit itself, and even less it is the same as objectivity *per se*. Can unqualified objectivity ever be attained? Therefore, Fichte's doctrine seems to represent just another attempt at reaching what is probably unreachable: unqualified (absolute) knowledge.

It is not by accident that the thinker himself continued to reformulate his *Wissenschaftslehre* throughout his life, leaving behind a large number of versions. Beginning with the urge for unconditional objectivity, Fichte arrives at the opposite: a conclusion that objectivity always denotes the phenomenological horizon of rationality. This is why, on the one hand, he maintains the striving for unconditional certainty, and, on the other hand, in a striking anticipation of Hegel's *Phenomenology*,[8] he writes that "the *Science of Knowledge* is to be a pragmatic history of the human mind" (GGW, 222; FES, 198–9).

At the same time, the concern with the logic of human spirit is sharply put by Fichte, and this issue must be underlined in view of later developments in German idealism. For he clearly infers that the rules of formal logic do not represent the eternal satellite of rationality, but only its device, and that rationality is not the same as formal logic at all. Behind Fichte's contention, as one can discern, there lies the Kantian distinction between general and transcendental logic and the limitations of general logic that Kant skillfully disclosed. But Kant's distinction collapsed when he allowed himself to transport the principles of general logic into the analysis of the transcendental logic. As we have seen in the previous chapter, Kant's own metalogic, although distinct, still succumbs to the same principles to which general (formal) logic does. This is especially lucid in the Transcendental Analytic. In the Transcendental Dialectic, Kant confronted the problem of contradiction and maintained a twofold position. He viewed dialectic as both inevitable and as the logic of illusion. It only *seems* that things are justified as contradictory. Yet, as Kant conceded, contradiction is *not a mere subjective mistake* that can be avoided, but it expresses the logic of the appearing object (the phenomenon) and occurs as soon as reason overcomes its transcendental restrictions. The paramount importance of the thing-in-itself as the source of intuition prevented Kant from moving further in the elaboration of the logical question. However, in Fichte's deliberate attempts to deduce *all* knowledge from within the subject, the distinction

8 W.S. Hartkopf, *op. cit.,* p. 202; also H. Rademacher, *Fichtes Begriff des Absoluten* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klosterman, 1970), p. 41.

between phenomena and the thing-in-itself is essentially obliterated; and the road to further development of dialectical logic lays open.

In his later works, comparing "ordinary" (formal) and "transcendental" (philosophical) logic, Fichte assigns *rest* to ordinary logic and *becoming* to transcendental logic, *empirical nature* to the one, and *scientific nature* to the other: "This [ordinary logic] speaks about being, that [transcendental logic] speaks about becoming" (UVL, 127–8). Formal logic "mistakes the form for the essence" and thus is able to produce only static concepts. Transcendental logic offers a *genetic* image: "ours is genetic, seeing thought in its becoming" (UVL, 321). Not only does Fichte emphasize all these distinctions, but he also charges Kant with ambiguity "that he wanted to leave the general logic standing and being valid next to the transcendental" *(daß er neben seiner transzendentalen Logik doch die gemeine stehen und gelten lassen wollte)* (UVL, 329).

If logic as a science is a *historical product* of *human spirit*, then can the freedom of spirit produce a different logic? If *Wissenschaftslehre* is to be accepted as a meta-logic of scientific discourse, it has to follow some principles. Fichte himself underlines the necessary character of the products of his science. The most important question, then, is about the principles that rule the *Wissenschaftslehre* as rigorously articulated and systematically exposed science and its relation to contradiction. At this point, Fichte stops and does not directly address the logical question *qua logical*, in the way in which Hegel will soon do in his *Science of Logic*. Nevertheless, the clue to the dialectic of rationality, to its historicity, and to limited scope of its devices (such as formal logic) seems clear.

Fichte is not committed to, and is far from, producing an "ontologization of formal logic,"[9] although he does concede its validity. He admits that the laws of common logic are assumed to be familiar and that one may appeal to the principles of common logic "even in establishing the highest fundamental principle" (GGW, 92; FES, 93, 94). But although the philosopher does confirm the validity of formal logic and the law of identity, his

9 I.S. Narski, *Dialektischer Widerspruch und Erkenntnislogik* (Berlin: VEB Deutscher Verlag der Wissenschaften, 1973), p. 31.

confirmation is the consequence instead of being the source of the *Wissenschaftslehre*; it is the conditioned instead of being the condition. Thus, the law of identity "can be demonstrated and determined only through the *Science of Knowledge*" (GGW, 99; FES, 99). Fichte abides by this premise. As we will discuss below, his meta-logic is not articulated in terms of what it is supposed to be articulating, and his deduction of categories already posits a different emphasis on their interrelation when compared to Kant's plain *Nebeneinandersetzung*. Fichte's contribution to the development of dialectical discourse is crucial; the overall advancement his philosophy denotes vis-à-vis Kant is radical and often underestimated. As this question is crucial for the current treatise, it will be elaborated in detail in my further discussion. First, however, I will examine the *Grundsatz* and its historiographical nature.

B. *The Transcendental Self as (F)act.*

The notion of the self follows from the logical circle that Fichte conceded in his attempt to establish the objectivity of knowledge, which is illustrated in his claim concerning the relationship between logic and philosophy. Suppose that we take the proposition A=A, which is an "undoubtedly logically correct proposition." This proposition, it must be emphasized, suggests no actual knowledge. It simply states that if something is, then it is. The proposition does not answer the question *whether* it is or not, or *why* it is, or *what* it is. For logic, the proposition A=A means "*if* A is, then A is." It is just a rule of inference, not of truth. But for philosophy, this proposition means "*because* A is … then A is." Suppose then, says Fichte, that the A designates the I, the self. Whereas logic would say "if I am then I am," philosophy will say "I am posited because I am posited, because I have posited myself. I am *because* I am" (UBW, 69; CCW, 124–5).

Fichte's example is carefully chosen, for it permits him to make a significant reversal. What in the above proposition was the particular illustration (I=I) of a general rule (A=A), turns out to be the condition of the validity of the rule. The reason is as follows: the proposition "A=A" is originally valid *only for the I*. It is a proposition derived from the "I am I," which is a proposition of the *Wissenschaftslehre*. Thus, all of the content to which the proposition

"A=A" is supposed to be applicable must be contained within the I. Therefore, A can be nothing but something *posited within the I*, and the proposition in question now reads: "That which is posited within the I is posited." If A is posited within in the I, then A is posited (UBW, 69–70; CCW, 125). Fichte's shift will constitute the basis of his system. From reducing the universal to the particular, the philosopher reduces the entire problem of objectivity to this initial expression that becomes the presupposition of all other knowledge.

The initially purely logical relationship gains concreteness in the human subject. Yet the subject seems to come from the outside, becoming the condition of the whole argument, instead of being its outcome. The whole enterprise initially aimed at *deducing* the I as the starting point of the analysis. Instead, the somehow preexisting I becomes the exemplifying case.

Fichte's response to this problem is concise, straightforward, and existentially grounded. It reproduces the abovementioned circularity of phenomenological consciousness and makes the search for absolute objectivity collapse. The philosopher's view is that the identity proposition (which does not offer any *actual knowledge*, but only an inference for existing or not existing knowledge) "is posited at least *in the I*, and posited by the I which judges in the above proposition" (GGW, 94; FES, 95[10]), it is a "fact of empirical consciousness"[11] (GGW, 94, 95, 98; FES, 95, 99; etc). The identity proposition is the I's, the self's own positing of itself. "*I am absolutely because I am*" (GGW, 98; FES, 99). "The I posits itself and by mere self-assertion it *exists*; and conversely, the I *exists* and *posits* its own existence by virtue of merely existing. It is at once agent and the product of action; the active and what the activity brings about" (GGW, 96; FES, 97). Such is the paradox of human existence. The self must be in order to be, let alone inquire about its existence.

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10 Heath and Lachs render the "I" as "self." For the sake of the continuity of my argument, I have modified the translation.

11 Cf. M. Heidegger, *Der Deutsche Idealismus (Fichte, Schelling, Hegel) und die philosophische Problemlage der Gegenwart,* in *Gesamtausgabe,* Bd. 29, ed. C. Strube (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1997), p. 57. Heidegger calls it 'the highest fact of empirical consciousness."

The I can grasp itself only in retrospect. Whatever I think of is what *I* think of, and this implies my self-identity, I=I. The positing receives no formal proof, but mere description. The principal attribute of the I is the *de facto* existing and *de facto* realized ability to posit itself. The I posits itself, and posits itself because it is. Self-positing and being are one and the same. As M. Vetö expresses it, the positing is just an "auto-positing."[12]

The I is meant to be the first step, the foundational principle of the system. Yet this principle, instead of being proven, is taken for granted. More precisely, the first principle can only be given in an act of intellectual intuition.[13] At this point Fichte departs from Reinhold's strategy:[14]

> This intuiting of himself that is required of the philosopher, in performing the act whereby the I arises for him, I refer to as *intellectual intuition.* It is the immediate consciousness that I act, and what I enact: it is that whereby I know something because I do it. We cannot prove from concepts that this power of intellectual intuition exists, nor

12 M. Vetö, *De Kant à Schelling*, pp. 342–5. I will add that such denotation matches with the etymology of the word in Greek: '*θέτω εαυτόν*' or to posit myself.

13 For a detailed discussion of the concept of intellectual intuition in Fichte, see J. Stolzenberg, *Fichtes Begriff der intellektuellen Anschauung: die Entwicklung in den Wissenschaftslehren von 1793/94 bis 1801/02* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1986).A number of commentators have argued that Fichte emphazises the intellectual intuition only in the 1797 edition of the *Wissenschaftslehre,* perhaps under the influence of Schelling. However, Novalis, one of Fichte's first commentators, discusses this notion in Fichte already in 1795. See Novalis, *Fichte Studies,* ed. Jane Kneller (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

14 For a more detailed recent discussion, see W. M. Martin, *Idealism and Objectivity*, p. 90–9, and T. Pinkard, *German Philosophy 1760–1860: The Legacy of Idealism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 105–30. "In almost all of his writings, Fichte drove the point home that the basic first principle of all true 'science' (which Reinhold had vainly sought in his 'propositions of consciousness') can *only* be given in such an intellectual intuition and that therefore no further justification can be given nor should be sought for it" (T. Pinkard, *op. cit.,* p. 110).

> evolve from them what it may be like we cannot explain to a blind person what colors are (ZEW, 463; SIW; 38; also ZEW, 370; etc.)

The I *is* the positing, it is the act through which the I becomes aware of itself. It is impossible to reflect upon oneself without already being oneself. Fichte's argument cannot be demonstrated via immediate reflective rationalization, for reflection is possible only by presupposing oneself as existing. And in such a case, the question of objectivity of reflection occurs anew. So one has to move from the one level of consideration to the next, and so on to infinity. The inquiry about the self already presupposes the self. This paradoxical circle of the reflection upon a ready made consciousness drives the thinker to admit that the I must initially posit itself intuitively. It is uncertain whether the designation of intellectual intuition helps Fichte to "successfully avoid the circularity of the reflection theory."[15] Fichte rather concedes the circularity of his argument and describes it as *unavoidable*: in his words, "that such a positing occurs, can be demonstrated by nothing else than a fact of consciousness, and everyone must demonstrate it for himself by this fact; nobody can prove it to another on rational grounds" (GGW, 252; FES, 223). And any further explanation, as Novalis puts it, "proceeds from the fact of all facts, or from the single original fact. It must be inexplicable, that is, its complete concept must be given with it."[16]

The intuitive positing of the self is only the first step, the next being the revelation of the self as active entity. Fichte's intellectual intuition is by definition an activity. Separating oneself from oneself, making the self an object for the self, means positing oneself. By the same token, in that very first step of positing, the self reveals itself as active ("striving," in Fichte's terminology): to posit

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15 D. Henrich, "Fichte's Original Insight," in Christensen et al., eds., *Contemporary German Philosophy,* Vol. 1 (University Park and London: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1982), p 27. Henrich describes Fichte's analysis as an attempt to avoid circularity, but eventually (pp. 38–9) grants that the philosopher finds no satisfactory explanation of the positing of the I.

16 Novalis, *Fichte Studies,* p. 164.

means to act, and to posit oneself means to actively understand oneself. The object (the self which becomes the object of the self) *cannot be grasped in contemplation.* In intuiting itself, the self already actively posits itself. On that, Fichte drastically departs from Kant and calls the Kantian notion of intuition a non-sense *(Unding)* (ZEW, 1: 472). Kant's understanding of intuition rests on the presupposition of the thing-in-itself as the source of intuition. Fichte works his way from the opposite direction, presenting the self as self-intuiting, for in his system the thing-in-itself is only a projection of the self. The constructive outcome of this strategy is that Fichte arrives at a standpoint of tremendous importance for the entire subsequent discourse from Schelling to Hegel and Marx: to be means to be active, "reason cannot even be theoretical if it is not practical; no intelligence is possible in man if he does not possess a practical capacity" (GGW, 264; FES; 235). Consciousness is coming to be in its activity. Activity is the way in which the I realizes itself. The notion of activity, the first and primordial attribute of the I, becomes for Fichte a "universal philosophical principle."[17]

But if consciousness is an activity, then consciousness is simultaneously the product of activity, for the self posits itself already as self. This means that the self is able to posit itself "as positing itself." This latter step denotes the consideration level (more precisely, metalevel) of the *Wissenschaftslehre.* But such consideration becomes possible only in *retrospect.* The self, then, can demonstrate that it does have awareness of itself as self, and thus can demonstrate the unity of concept and intuition. For intuition is *intellectual* intuition, that is, a concept. If intuition refers to the mere existence of the self, the intellectual nature of the intuitive act necessarily becomes acknowledged as reflection. The reflecting self first posits itself in an act of intellectual intuition, and then realizes itself as reflection. The self is, it posits itself intuitively, it is active, and intuition becomes reflection. The insight that leads to Hegel's *Phenomenology* is more than evident in Fichte's reasoning. Reflection is the source and also the consequence of the I's activity. At this point, the circle reveals itself once again.

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17 P.P. Gaidenko, *Filosofia Fichte y Sovremennost'* [*Fichte's Philosophy and Contemporaneity*] (Moskva: Mysl', 1979), p. 14.

> Yet those laws of reflection, which, in the course of the *Wissenschaftslehre*, we find to be the only possible laws of thought which a *Wissenschaftslehre* could come into being (even though they agree with those rules which we hypothetically presupposed at the outset of our enterprise) are nevertheless themselves results of their own previous employment. Here a new circle reveals itself: we have presupposed certain laws of reflection and now, in the course of our science, we find that these are the only laws possible (UBW, 75; CCW, 129).

It is noteworthy that Fichte describes the laws of reflection as the only possible laws of thought. Obviously, he has in mind the laws of formal logic; nevertheless, as has already been discussed, his position toward formal logic is ambiguous. This ambiguity notwithstanding, Fichte is also clear that these laws are the result of the self's activity, and the "result of their previous employment." In this sense, Hegel, too, will later see the laws of formal logic as only a historically limited device of the movement of spirit, but he will be unambiguous and categorical in his criticism of formal logic.

Fichte has multi-step strategy in his deduction. The self posits itself initially as intuition. This is the first logical step. By positing itself, the self reveals itself as active. At the same time, intuition is an intellectual act. Therefore, the self realizes that it is also reflecting upon itself. By the same token, the self has to intuitively separate itself in order to realize that it intellectually gazes upon its own self. The intuition is meant to demonstrate the facticity of the self, and the reflection is meant to demonstrate the intellectual nature of the self. These two facets of the self are conceived as logically sequential, not chronologically sequential. However, the logical movement of the self from intuition to reflection has its historical mirroring. Time is the realm in which the ego actualizes itself. Consequently, history is going to be the conjecture of the coming to be of the self in Fichte's practical philosophy. This idea about history will be more emphatically put in Schelling's *System of Transcendental Idealism*, in which the natural and historical (in this sense, practical) self is restored as the otherness of the intellectual (theoretical) self. The advance in Hegel's system will be similar.

We have already seen that Kant had made the transcendental unity of apperception the cornerstone of his derivation of knowledge, and it had been argued that the self is the unavoidable, existential presupposition of knowledge. Fichte follows Kant's path.

However, whereas the I is always the *inevitable* start of knowledge, and one might be sympathetic with Fichte in this respect, the philosopher's attempt is to find the *absolute* start and ground an *absolute* certainty. This is, again, a remnant of metaphysical philosophizing, of a philosophy which pursues everlasting truths. I have traced such methodical twofoldness in Kant's work, despite Kant's unequivocal renunciation of earlier metaphysics. Fichte's turn toward the subject is essentially Kantian. Fichte denies metaphysics, but upholds the quest for metaphysical certainty. On the one hand, there is the phenomenological *démarche* and the historization of consciousness. On the other hand, there is the search for *unqualified* and, therefore, ahistorical certainty. Thus, Fichte's advice is that one must hold onto the first principle (the self) with unquestionable devotion, despite the circularity in its derivation: "To desire the abolition of this circle is to desire that human knowledge be totally without any foundation. It is to desire that nothing should be absolutely certain" (UBW, 62; CCW, 119). However, is there absolute certainty at all? Can there be certainty beyond its historiographical determinations and approximations? Is not the yearning for unqualified certainty the point where epistemology merges with metaphysics? In my view, there is an internal dividedness in Fichte's philosophy,[18] and it is the same as the dividedness in Kant's philosophy.

Fichte's paradoxical position is that he desires to establish an absolute foundation of knowledge while effectively denying the absoluteness of that foundation. In modern epistemological jargon, Fichte can count as both foundationalist (in accepting the unavoidability of the self at the beginning of knowledge) and antifoundationalist (in rejecting the possibility of ultimate

18 This duplicity has been brought up in the Dan Breazeale's repeated defenses of Fichte, first as division between "existential and scientific tasks of philosophy" and recently as division between "the letter and the spirit of the *Wissenschaftslehre.*" See D. Breazeale, "Philosophy and the Divided Self. On the 'existential' and 'scientific' tasks of the Jena Wissenschaftslehre," in *Fichte Studien,* Vol. 6, 1994, pp. 117–47; D. Breazeale, "The Spirit of the *Wissenschaftslehre,*" in S. Sedgwick, *op. cit.,* pp. 171–98. Cf. also the discussion by George Seidel. Seidel asks: Who is doing the *Wissenschaftslehre?* How "absolute" can then be its claims? See G. J. Seidel, *Activity and Ground: Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel* (New York, Hindelsheim: Georg Olms 1976), pp. 43–50, esp. 47–8.

objectivity of knowledge).[19] As R. Pippin recently argued, Fichte "is a foundationalist but of a peculiar sort. To understand the I as 'the ultimate foundation' simply means that there is no 'end' to the self-critical, *self*-adjusting activity that makes-up the 'whole' of the self's positings."[20] As a matter of fact, what is demonstrated in Fichte's argument is the existential certainty of the self, not at all a metaphysical certainty. (From this vantage point, and having in mind that in his early works Fichte was not talking about absolute knowing or knowledge of the absolute at all, one can see why he got involved in the Atheism Debate.)

Pivotal to my interpretation of the self is its existential aspect. Conceding the circle in his derivation, Fichte remains acutely aware of the role of the self in any philosophy. He admits that the grounding of the self is consonant with the weight that Kant gives to the unity of apperception, and that effectively the same

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19 This point has been repeatedly made in the works of Tom Rockmore. See esp. T. Rockmore, "Antifoundationalism, Circularity and the Spirit of Fichte," in D. Breazeale, and T. Rockmore, eds., *Fichte: Historical Contexts/Contemporary Controversies* (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1994), pp 96–112; T. Rockmore, "Fichte's Antifoundationalism, Intellectual Intuition and Who One Is," in D. Breazeale, and T. Rockmore, eds., *New Perspectives on Fichte* (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1996), p. 79–94. Frederick Beiser finds an answer to Fichte's dichotomy in the philosopher's treatment of reason: "Fichte was and was not a foundationalist, depending on whether one considers his views on practical or theoretical reason. He rejected foundationalism insofar as its arguments are based on constitutive principles; but he attempted to revive it by basing its argument on regulative principles." See F. Beiser, *German Idealism. The Struggle Against Subjectivism. 1781–1801* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002), p. 239. Similarly, K. Ameriks (*Kant and the Fate of Autonomy*, pp. 164ff.) and D. Breazeale (*The Spirit of the Wissenschaftslehre,* pp. 186ff.) see in Fichte a "practical foundationalist." In my view, this latter interpretation is justifiable only if one has in mind, first, Fichte's appropriation and radicalization of Kant's concept of freedom and, second, his negative treatment of the thing-in-itself about which I argue in this essay. Without these presuppositions, the argument collapses.

20 R. Pippin, "Fichte's Alleged Subjective, Psychological, One-Sided Idealism," in S. Sedgwick, *op. cit.,* p. 157.

argument originates in Descartes. Fichte does object to Descartes in one thing, however, in that the Cartesian attachment of *cogito* to the self is superfluous. For thinking is a determination, not the essence of existence. Further, Fichte views Reinhold's substitution of *cogito, ergo sum* with *repraesento, ergo sum* as a step forward. Yet, even the representation is only a determination of existence. Existence can be demonstrated in the fact of existence, and this fact is impossible to reject. In the *Concerning the Concept of the Wissenschaftslehre,* Fichte characteristically recalls the Cartesian *reductio ad absurdum:*

> Whoever so wishes can always ask himself what he would know if his I were not an I, if he did not exist, and if he could not distinguish something not-I from his I (UBW, 62; CCW, 119).

Nevertheless, Fichte's analysis is not the same as that of Descartes. Comparing the two philosophers, R. Lauth[21] argues that Descartes "had been the founder of transcendental philosophy, before the term itself existed."[22] According to Lauth, Descartes understood the need of an initial highest principle of knowledge when in a letter to Picot in 1647, he proposed three requirements for its rigorous exposition: "(1) The truth of the supreme principle must be self-evident; (2) cognition of all other things must depend on this supreme principle and must be developed as derived from it in a succession of clearly intelligible steps; (3) Ontological views depend on (*découlent*) epistemological views."[23] In Lauth's view, Descartes' three requirements match the conditions set by Fichte.

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21 R. Lauth, "La conception Cartésienne et Fichtéenne de la Fondation du savoir," in I. Radrizzani, ed., *Fichte et la France* (Paris: Beauchesne, 1997), pp. 35–59; See also R. Lauth, *Transzendentale Entwicklungslinien von Descartes bis zu Marx und Dostojewski* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1989), pp. 385ff.

22 R. Lauth, *La conception Cartésienne et Fichtéenne de la Fondation du savoir*, pp. 35, 54.

23 *Ibid.*, p. 37.

With respect to the irrefutability of the I as the first presupposition of knowledge, the similarity is obvious. In circumscribing the human condition, the Cartesian *cogito* comprises a finality that is extremely difficult to overcome. Further, the similarity can be traced in a conditionally taken, "purely" epistemological sense. The latter is related to the derivation of knowledge, namely, that knowledge becomes possible as knowledge only once it has become knowledge. Finally, with respect to the *procedure* of obtaining knowledge, one may record several similarities between Descartes and Fichte, as Lauth properly does (circularity, the grounding of the existence of God, etc.).[24]

The proximity of the arguments of the two philosophers notwithstanding, Lauth's argument calls for objections. First of all, consciousness in Fichte is not given and ready-made, but it is a coming-to-be consciousness via the notion of activity. The second objection follows from the first. The Fichtean I is not a cognitive but primarily a practical I and only then cognitive. Fichte makes it clear that the self exists as existing and not as cognizant, and only at a subsequent stage does it become aware of itself and, thus, cognizes. Finally, Fichte's procedure is phenomenological or transcendental. Descartes' procedure is not phenomenological, despite his rationalism (wherefrom the obvious affinities with transcendentalism derive). Descartes reconstructs the *object*, not the *transcendental conditions* of the object's possibility.

In sum, the revelation of the similarities between transcendentalism and rationalism may be profitable, but it works only in one direction. Although in terms of the rationalist-empiricist debate Fichte (as well as Kant) could be considered a rationalist, it does not seem that Descartes would unquestionably count as a transcendentalist.

It is also worth discussing the twofold nature of the notion of the transcendental as this is expressed in Fichte's deduction. Fichte's focus on grounding practical subjectivity sharpens the ambiguity of the "purely logical" subject that stood behind the deduction of the categories in the *Critique of Pure Reason*. There are two sides of

24 *Ibid.*, pp. 38, 43, etc.

this question corresponding to what Fichte endeavors to achieve and what he actually achieves.

Let us first see what his endeavors are. Under the influence of the French Revolution, Fichte more explicitly relates the Kantian subject to the human historical subject,[25] yet his shift should not count as a regression. For his ambition is not to subjectivize thought but rather to trace its universally valid elements. The philosopher's "absolute I" points to the intersubjective[26] nature of the spiritual world, and aims at expressing the essence of reason as both a supra-individual faculty and a human faculty. Positioning himself between two extremes, Fichte seeks to portray the essential ontogenetic and phylogenetic features of thought as neither metaphysical-theological nor empirical-psychological.[27] As G. Zöller puts it, "the I is portrayed as self-enclosed to the point of seeming totally self-sufficient and a world unto its own. Yet the self-sufficiency in question is not the ontological independence or self-sufficiency of a divine mind, but the epistemological isolation of a finite intelligence that originally knows only itself, including its own states, and that derives all other knowledge from experience of its own finitude."[28] In this sense, Fichte appeals to empirical consciousness only in order to exemplify his initial postulates, to display the human dimension of the transcendental self, and not at all to reduce the transcendentally logical to the empirical-psychological. As a transcendental philosopher Fichte is by

25 T. Rockmore, "Fichte, Representation and the Copernican Revolution," in D. Breazeale, and T. Rockmore, eds., *New Essays on Fichte's later Jena* Wissenschaftslehre, pp. 345–57.

26 In detail, see esp. "Das Problem der Interpersonalität bei J. G. Fichte," in R. Lauth, *Transzendentale Entwicklungslinien,* pp. 180–95. See also I. Radrizzani, *Vers La Fondation de l'Intersubjectivité chez Fichte. Des Principes à la Nova Methodo* (Paris: Vrin, 1993).

27 Cf. here the interpretation of J. Stolzenberg in "Fichtes Satz" Ich bin. "Argumentanalytische Überlegungen zu Paragraph 1 der *Grundlagen der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre* von 1794/95," *Fichte Studien,* vol. 6 (1994), pp. 1–34.

28 G. Zöller, *Fichte's Transcendental Philosophy*, p. 36.

definition vehemently opposed to such reduction.[29] Thus he endeavors to depict the I as "a structural complex or a complex structure that precedes all possible individual mental life."[30] Subjectivity then is a supra-individual concept, whose principles are realized by the individual subject in a circular manner, for the individual subject itself is so structured. Accordingly, the *Wissenschaftslehre* seeks to provide a systematic theory of consciousness in its intersubjective, logical sense. It is a *logical* derivation of subjectivity, which only *subsequently* may be attained by the empirical subject. At the same time, the logical is grasped by Fichte as phenomenological and historical.

This is not to say that Fichte unquestionably succeeds in his venture. As I see it, he has a twofold problem. First, departing from the subjective I, the self, and moving toward the other, he establishes a relationship between the I and not-I, not a relationship between the I and the We. Yet, I versus not-I assumes nothing but the Robinsonian, individualistic methodological attitude, that same attitude which is characteristic not only for empiricism but for the philosophy of the enlightenment altogether. Contrary to that, as Hegel will later argue, a successful theory of intersubjectivity is not one which places the particular versus another particular, but one that places the particular versus and through the universal and vice versa (for the intersubjective is not over and above the subjective, but articulates itself only *through the subjective*). Deduction is impossible without the methodological presupposition of mutual penetration of the one in the other. Although the I is unquestionably the starting point, not a step further can be done without the acceptance that the I comes in tandem with the We, and this happens *before* any deduction, it is not the result of deduction (or its first step).

The second problem that Fichte faces involves the fact that his deduction starts from the subject, moves from within the subject, and stays within the subject all the way. It cannot therefore account for the relationship between concept and intuition, between

29 See the discussion in M. Vetö, *De Kant à Schelling. Les des voies de l'idéalisme allemand*, p. 350ff.

30 G. Zöller, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

subject and reality, between the theoretical and the empirical. As a matter of fact, this is a requirement which Fichte renounces altogether. His narrative can thus account for the internal consistency of conceptual cognition in the transcendental sense alone. Yet the problem of truth and certainty, which has been the perennial cornerstone of philosophical inquiry, cannot be solved if restricted only within the subjective faculty. This amounts to the search of objectivity without the object, and it only sharpens the methodological ambiguities that characterized Kant's philosophy.[31]

In the *Wissenschaftslehre*, the description of the first *Grundsatz* occupies just a few paragraphs. As succinct as the portrayal of the initial principle is, its importance for the entire body of Fichtean philosophy is tremendous. The *Grundsatz* is the cornerstone that will permit the philosopher to move toward the strategic goal of integrating all human knowledge: from this initial postulate, Fichte will systematically deduce the entire theoretical and practical constitutive moments of the possibility of reality, seeking thereby to overcome Kant's internal and deliberately maintained twofoldness.

Once the self realizes itself as such, the formal laws of inference are employed to deduce further knowledge. From the first principle, the I, Fichte proceeds to deduce the second principle, the not-I. The argument is brief: by accepting that the I equals the I, it can be derived that the not-I is equal to the not-I, and then that the I is not equal to the not-I (I=I; -I=-I; I not=-I). Thus, the self is opposed to the not-self, the object. Fichte admits that "the same reason which made it impossible to prove or to derive the first principle also applies to the second" (GGW, 101, FES, 102). The not-I is, just because it is.

In deducing the first principle, the reflection is inward. The I makes itself an object. In deducing the second principle, the

31 I believe that the same methodological objections can be raised against Fichte's practical philosophy, which is frequently seen as the place where his theory of intersubjectivity is properly developed. See for example, Klaus Brinkmann, "The Deduction of Intersubjectivity in Fichte's *Grundlage des Naturrechts*," in D. Breazeale and T. Rockmore, eds., *New Essays in Fichte's Later Jena* Wissenschaftslehre, pp. 5–17.

reflection is outward, it concerns something else that the self, the object as object. Thus, the I posits the not-I and the subject is discerned from the real object. The following is of huge importance: the discernment occurs *within* consciousness, within the self. It is the self that posits the not-self, the subject that posits the object. Such is the direction in which Fichte propels the Kantian dualism, finding it thereby possible to demonstrate the unity between self and object in a dramatic methodological advancement which is full of dialectical explorations and anticipations. I will now specifically address this issue, which I consider as being Fichte's supreme input in the discourse of German idealism.

C. *Fichte's New Dialectic and the Grasp of the Problem of Contradiction*

Kant introduced a new way of philosophizing that, in the Second Introduction to the *Critique of Pure Reason*, he himself called a "revolution in thinking"; his followers picked up where he left off. When in 1794 S. Maimon entitled one of his works "Essays Towards a New Logic or Theory of Thought" (*Versuch einer neuen Logik oder Theorie des Denkens*), what he had in mind was transcendentalism as solving the question of the certainty of philosophical claims.[32] But he apparently had no idea how far the discussion about a new logic would take its participants.

For Maimon, for Schulze, as well as for most of the contributors of the philosophical discussion of that time, the principle of non-contradiction was unquestionably valid. Representing a typical post-Kantian approach, Novalis remarked in his notebooks on the *Wissenschaftslehre* that "the principle of identity is a principle of truth – reality. The principle of contradiction – principle of illusion – [is a principle] of negation."[33] And Jacob Beck thus

32 For a comparison between Maimon's and Fichte's understanding of dialectic, see K. Hammacher, "Fichte und das Problem der Dialektik," in C. Asmuth, ed., *Sein – Reflektion – Freiheit. Aspekte der Philosophie Johann Gottlieb Fichtes* (Amsterdam/Philadelphia: Grüner, 1997), pp. 115–41; also K. Hammacher, "Zur transzendentallogischen Begründung der Dialektik bei Fichte," in *Kant Studien,* vol. 79 (1988), pp. 467–75.

33 Novalis, *Fichte Studies,* p. 79.

had no idea how far the discourse would lead when in 1796 he wrote: "One species of philosophers [rationalists and skeptics like Schulze – N.L.] puts the principle of contradiction at the head of philosophy. I think that I can state this principle without arousing any dispute with the formula: 'An object cannot be represented through mutually contradictory determinations.' "[34] Repeating Kant's position almost verbatim, these passages show that contradiction is not yet addressed positively. Yet the need to repeatedly ascertain the law of identity confirms yet again that this law is being challenged and that the concept of contradiction is on the agenda. With regard to Fichte, as I will try to show below, Novalis's interpretation is simply a misreading. For in his attempts to overcome skepticism, Fichte will inaugurate a radically new vision of contradiction.

The Fichtean I is analogous to the Kantian subject's transcendental unity of apperception. However, as the Kantian opposition between subject and object is, in Fichte's doctrine, transferred within the subject, *ipso facto* Fichte's subject consists of more than the Kantian "unity." Its fundamental characteristic is the antithetical nature that floods its entire activity, and the *Wissenschaftslehre* is respectively pervaded by such a dialectic. Fichte's formal acceptance of the law of identity, besides being emptied of any real value (Fichte repeatedly clarifies that the law of identity only infers *from* but does not *by itself* offer any new knowledge), is supplemented by the proof of the identity's limitations throughout the *Wissenschaftslehre*. Not identity, but difference and contradiction, prove to be the "logical structure that lies on the ground of the *Grundlage*, in the general light of which one can understand the meaning of Fichte's critical idealism or his 'transcendental' thinking."[35]

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34 See G. di Giovanni, and H.S. Harris, eds., *Texts in the Development of Post-Kantian Idealism,* pp. 210, 218.

35 G. Duso, "Absolutheit und Widerspruch in der *Grundlage der gesamten Wissenschaftslehre,*" in E. Fuchs, and I. Radrizzani, eds., *Der Grundansatz der ersten Wissenschaftslehre Johan Gottlieb Fichtes* (Neuried: Ars Una Verlag, 1996), p. 145.

Actually, Fichte portrays these oppositions in the very first acts of the I. The structure of these is triple and unified. The I posits itself, posits the opposite of itself, and posits itself as united with what is opposed to itself. The activity is therefore thetic, antithetic, and synthetic. Thus, not only does the I produce the not-I, but it is at the same time identical to it, for both itself and its otherness are posited by the I. "Both I and not-I are alike products of original acts of the I, and consciousness itself is similarly a product of the I's first original act, its own positing of itself" (GGW, 107; FES, 107). That initial juxtaposition creates a salient result:

> Thus I is not=I, but rather I=to not-I, and not-I=I ("Mithin ist Ich nicht=Ich, sondern Ich=Nicht-Ich, und Nicht-Ich=Ich" – GGW, 107; FES, 107).

In a reverse way, what Fichte has been doing so far can be formalized as follows: A not=A, but rather not-A=A. In its formal aspect, this statement equals the rejection of the law of identity. A few particularities about this rejection must be briefly mentioned though. First, the refutation of the *formal* law of identity cannot be a *formal* rejection. Formal description fails to grasp the concrete *content*; it is one-sided, and falls back into the logic of the understanding. Thus, overcoming the law of identity and defending contradiction by means of formalization is impossible. Second, Fichte's criticism of formal logic, although straightforward and unswerving, cannot be properly appreciated when viewed as being based on a mere juxtaposition of formal logic to dialectic. For dialectic, besides uniting form and content, is also is distant from opposing everything to everything and resulting into chaos. It pertains to a concrete juxtaposition of a concept to its own opposite on the basis of a common ground. For Fichte, such a common ground, or common denominator, is consciousness. Finally, Fichte's criticism of formal logic must not be viewed separately from the momentously important addition of the *active* nature of consciousness. In the philosopher's view, consciousness is not only antithetical, but also practical. It is coming to be in its antithetical

activity. Therefore, to formal logic Fichte juxtaposes a praxeological logic,[36] and does so well before Hegel.

Placing his criticism along the lines of his substantiation of subjectivity, Fichte skillfully steers clear of the threat that "the identity of consciousness, the sole absolute foundation of our knowledge is itself eliminated" (GGW, 107; FES, 107), by invoking the concepts of limitation and divisibility: the I and not-I are posited in consciousness as limited and divisible, that is, the one is posited as reality to the extent that the other is negated. The identity of consciousness is maintained in that consciousness is what unites the opposites. Thus, "the I is to be equated with, and yet opposed to itself," and in tandem the opposition is "united, without detriment to the unity of consciousness" (GGW, 110; FES, 109).

Consciousness thus contains both opposites within itself and this is what Fichte understands as the might of reason (*Machtspruch der Vernunft*).[37] The limitation of one act by the other is not a formal negation, but a dialectical inclusion. Yet the essential aspect of Fichte's argument is, in my opinion, the following: *Limitation and divisibility do not take place as consecutive acts; they are simultaneous.* Thus, I and not-I are posited as divisible, yet "immediately within and alongside the act of opposition; both are one and the same, and are distinguished only in reflection" (GGW, 109, 113; FES, 108, 112). Not only must the I posit "a conflict of opposing directions," but it must also not posit either one of them alone, "it must posit them both and must posit them *in conflict*" (GEW, 336; ODW, 248). Fichte's approach differs from Kant's in a radical way and displays a striking similarity with contentions that

36 See Klaus Hammacher's assessment in "Fichtes praxologische Dialektik," *Fichte Studien*, vol. 1 (1990), pp. 25–40. The relation between formal logic and dialectic will be discussed in detail at the end of the present investigation.

37 See also Heidegger's discussion in M. Heidegger, *Die Philosophie des Deutschen Idealismus,* pp. 80–92, esp. p. 89; Comparing Fichte to Hegel, R. Kroner discerns their similarity, but also a deficiency of Fichte in that the *Grundsätze* are supposed not to be separated from each other, but be only one (Kroner R. *Von Kant bis Hegel,* pp. 436–8). As a matter of fact, it is one and the same self that contains the unity of propositions in Hegel, and this is clear already in Fichte.

are typically ascribed to Hegel. But the famous Hegelian identity of identity and non-identity is already introduced in Fichte's line of reasoning.

After explaining the antithetic of the self, Fichte then proceeds to a second round of reasoning with the intent to arrive at a more principal rule. Asking that one abstracts from the content of what has been said, the philosopher sets forth the formal proposition "A in part = –A, and *vice versa*" (GGW, 111; FES, 110). These two terms are mediated by an X which is introduced as substitution of the I. Suppose then, says Fichte, that all things that are posited are equal to themselves as this is required by the formal law of identity: A = A, B = B, etc.

> From this it is evident that the proposition A = B can be valid, though as such contradicts the proposition A = A. A = A, X = X, B = X. Hence A = B to the extent that each = X (GGW, 111; FES, 111).

In other words, B counts as –A because B is not posited through the A, but through the X. And to that extent it is obvious that A = –A. Fichte's conclusion is impressive. Moving from identity to contradiction, it displays a fact well-known to all logicians, namely, that formal statements lead to contradictory conclusions and, in a reverse way, formally correct conclusions may be meaningless or absurd. Yet, while many admit that formal logic fails to offer insights to the true nature of things, this discipline is still today, no less than in Fichte's time, considered the source of correct thinking *par excellence*. In the previous chapter I discussed the same problem in relation to Kant's ambiguous relationship to formal logic. With respect to Fichte, we now see that not only is he critical of this discipline, but also he deliberately pursues his criticism in sanctioning statements that are legitimate, although they contradict the law of identity. In Fichte's view, the law of identity does not produce new knowledge, and this is precisely what he had in mind at the start of his discussion when he *de facto* voided that law from any meaning. He acknowledges the concrete nature of contradiction by pointing to the common ground of the opposites involved. Finally, Fichte offers a striking response to Kant's question of how *a priori* synthetic judgments (i.e., judgments that produce new knowledge) are possible:

> All synthetic concepts arise through unification of opposites … In every proposition, therefore, we must begin by pointing out opposites which are to be reconciled (GGW, 114, 123; FES, 112, 120, 121).

From there, the philosopher goes on to elaborate the Kantian idea of synthetic thinking. In Fichte's grasp, synthetic thinking constitutes "discovering in opposites the respect in which they are *alike*" (GGW, 113; FES, 111). At the same time, it should be clear that "there can be no antithesis without synthesis; for antithesis consists merely in seeking out the point of opposition between things that are alike; but these like things would not be alike if they had not first been equated in an act of synthesis" (GGW, 113; FES, 112), that is, in an act of consciousness. Consciousness, in being able to articulate its own self only by including its otherness in its own self, is also able to join oppositions together: "both must be thought as *one and the same*" (GGW,129; FES, 125). As Fichte succinctly puts it elsewhere, "it is the office of the synthesizing faculty to unite opposites, to *think* them as one" (GGW, 225; FES, 201).

Zöller renders this problem with precision: Fichte's fundamental dialectics of the "identity of opposites" originates in an opposition between the real and the ideal but "shows itself as a fundamental opposition within thinking itself."[38] Fichte repeatedly refers to this internally oppositional, yet unitary basic structure of the human mind as its "original duplicity." It is a duplicity that is reproduced in every act of the mind. Thus, the I divulges itself in a restless opposition: "the action of the I … is purely antithetical" (GEW, 335; ODW, 248). Yet, this twirl is not only antithetical but also integrative, for "the activity, as synthetic unity, is most briefly described as *an absolute conjoining and holding fast of opposites*" (GGW, 205; FES, 185). Fichte writes straightforwardly: "from the very fact of absolute opposition there follows the entire mechanism of the human mind; and this entire mechanism can be explained no otherwise than by the fact of absolute opposition" (GGW, 226; FES, 202).

38 G. Zöller, *Fichte's Transcendental Philosophy*, p. 90ff.

In a traverse way, as I. Radrizzani fairly comments, contradiction is not only the *modus operandi* of the human mind but also its condition. The "shock" produced by the antithetical activity "is the condition of the possibility of consciousness, for without the shock there would be no limitation, hence there could not be reflection and the I could not posit itself reflectively, it could not in effect be for the I, hence it would be nothing."[39]

A detailed examination of Fichte's deduction is beyond the scope of this book. It is enough, for my purposes, to emphasize that Fichte's derivations follow the same fundamentally dialectical structure that is permeated by constant contradictions. Thus, the Fichtean I unfolds as being determining, in one respect, and determined, in another; as being limiting in one respect, and limited in another; as being passive in one respect, and active in another. Fichte puts on display an interchange of activity, limitation, exchange, transition *(Thätigkeit, Beschränkung, Wechseln, Übergehen)*, and universal fluidity, a dialectic in which "the matter determines its form" and "form determines its matter," and "infinity and bounding are united in one and the same synthetic component" (GGW, 214; FES, 192). The philosopher portrays a reciprocal movement of "*coming-to-be through and passing away* a becoming through a disappearance" (GGW, 179; FES, 165)[40] in which "light and darkness are not opposed in principle, but differ only in degree. Darkness is simply a very minute amount of light" (GGW, 145; FES, 138).

Fichte asks, "Who can understand the *Wissenschaftslehre*?" in his 1813 *Introductory Lectures to the Wissenschaftslehre*. He replies: "He to whom being appears no more as alien and presupposed but as coming-to-be, comprehensible and explainable" (EVW, 20). These are elaborations that characterize the philosopher's own transcendental deduction. The deduction is carried out in

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39 "Le choc est la condition de la possibilité de la conscience, car, sans le choc il n'y a pas de limitation, donc il ne pourrait pas y avoir de réflexion, et le moi ne pourrait pas se saisir réflexivement, par suite il ne serait pas pour le moi, donc ne serait rien." I. Radrizzani, *Vers La Fondation de l'Intersubjectivité chez Fichte,* p. 76.

40 "ein *Entstehen und Vergehen,* ein Werden durch ein Verschwinden."

a radically post-Kantian way that underlines the systematic unity of the categories. The path-breaking nature of Fichte's attempt is demonstrated in Hegel's praise: "These particular thought-determinations he calls categories, and he seeks to demonstrate them in their inner necessity; from the time of Aristotle onwards no one had thought of so doing."[41]

The theoretical part of the *Wissenschaftslehre* ends with the deduction of representation in which the philosopher argues for the crucial role of the power of free imagination *(freie Einbildungskraft)*[42]:

> [The] interplay of the self, in and with itself, whereby it posits itself at once as finite and infinite – an interplay that consists, as it were, in self-conflict, and is self reproducing, in that the self endeavors to unite the irreconcilable, now attempting to receive the infinite in the form of the finite, now, baffled, positing it again outside the latter, and in that very moment seeking once more to entertain it under the form of finitude – this is the power of *imagination* (GGW, 215; FES, 193).

Granted the intellectual intuition as the means, the mind develops a distinct ability, "the power of imagination, which reconciles the contradictions" (GGW, 218; FES, 195), in order to bring together the opposing directions and manifestations of its activity.[43] It must be said that Fichte's dialectic has a substantial restraint in respect

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41 Hegel, HP3, 491; VGP3, 400.

42 On the notion of imagination, see the informative essay by A. Philonenko "Über die schöpferische Einbildungskraft bei Fichte," in E. Fuchs., and I. Radrizzani, eds., *Der Grundansatz der ersten Wissenschaftslehre Johann Gottlieb Fichtes,* pp. 165–77.

43 For a recent discussion of the entire process of philosophical abstraction in Fichte, see D. Breazeale, "Inference, Intuition and Imagination. On the Methodology and Method of the First Jena *Wissenschaftslehre,*" in D. Breazeale, and T. Rockmore, *New Essays in Fichte's* Foundation of the Entire Doctrine of Scientific Knowledge (Amherst: Humanity Books, 2001), pp. 19–36; S. Hoeltzel, "Fichte's Deduction of Representation in the 1794–5 *Grundlage,*" in *ibid.,* pp. 39–59.

to the thoroughly discursive exposition that Hegel will later present, for there will be no place for imagination in the *Science of Logic*. In Fichte, imagination assists the mind in forming an ideal image that helps to correlate the real with the ideal, infinity and finitude, unity and diversity, and abridges the gap between the object and its schematic representation. Imagination, "by its own nature, wavers in general between object and non-object" (GGW, 243; FES, 215), playing the role of the mediator between the I and the image of reality. In this way Fichte attempts to answer the Kantian riddle of how the manifold of empirical objects can be unified under a single concept and why representations conform to the objects and vice versa. For Kant, such a step would be inconceivable, for the sources of the two (concept and intuition) are different. Kant's answer would be, as always, twofold: On the one hand, the mind has ability to generate *a priori* knowledge; on the other hand, knowledge always begins with experience. Kant found it impossible to elaborate further. As I have argued in the first chapter, the solution to this riddle amounts to the redefinition of transcendentalism. Fichte raises the stakes further. He emphasizes transcendentalism, yet he does so in an epistemologically monistic way. Stretching one wing of the Kantian dichotomy, Fichte derives the entire body of knowledge from the subject. For even if the thing-in-itself affects our intuition, knowledge becomes *knowledge* solely via the I. Hence, for Fichte, the sources of knowledge are not two, but effectively one: the I and its faculties. In this way, the entire sphere of outside things is produced by the imagination. "All reality … is brought forth solely by the imagination" (GGW, 227; FES, 202; also BBW, 365, etc). Such a stance does not mean that Fichte abandons the transcendental project for the sake of a one-sided idealism. Seen from a reverse angle, knowledge becomes meaningful only as practical knowledge, that is, as applicable to reality. Without the practical side, knowledge would be a sheer illusion. Thus, imagination carries importance for both theoretical and practical realms.[44]

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44 See also P.P. Gaidenko, *Filosofia Fichte y Sovremennost'* [*Fichte's Philosophy and Contemporaneity*], p. 66ff.

In Fichte, imagination exists as a permanent swerving, a back and forth that by itself is unable to bring intuition into a concrete form. The results of imagination are put together by the understanding. For to "under-stand" means to stabilize (the English word successfully transfers the etymological structure of the German *Verstehen*). Thus, as Fichte writes,

> It is the power whereby a transiency is *arrested, settled,* as it were, or brought to a stand, and is thus rightly termed *understanding.* – Understanding is such, simply insofar as something is stabilized therein; and everything stable is stabilized in the understanding. It might be described either as the imagination stabilized by reason, or as reason furnished by the imagination. – Understanding is a dormant, inactive power of the mind, the mere receptacle of what imagination brings forth, and what reason determines or has yet to determine; whatever may have been told of its doings at one time or another GGW, 233; FES, 207).

The understanding is treated in a way that is not so far from Kant as it is close to Hegel. With regard to the logic of cognition, Kant's dualism had a twofold restriction: it neither allowed him to challenge the law of contradiction, nor to traverse dialectic into the process of deduction of the categories. Hence, the entire realm of theoretical knowledge remained within the restraints of the understanding. Fichte overcomes both problems in one step, namely, in his eliminative approach to the thing-in-itself. First, his approach allows him to portray a picture of movement and change, and to decisively empty formal logic from philosophical value. Second, Fichte reduces the cognitive importance of the understanding and simultaneously lets the understanding fuse with reason into a unified stream of cognition.

The attempt to systematically deduce knowledge by demonstrating its interrelations forced Hegel to admit that in Fichte one finds the first "rational" attempt to deduce the categories.[45] Hegel's use of the word "reason" is not inadvertent. It amounts to the acknowledgement that the *de facto* elimination of the distinction

45 Hegel, HP3, 493; VGP3, 401.

between the thing-in-itself and the phenomena is accompanied by the obliteration of the sharp Kantian separation between reason and understanding. Hegel interprets Fichte's shift as a surprisingly positive outcome, namely the portrayal of both faculties as acting within one and the same dimension. Such implicit unity is substantial for Hegel's own grasp. *The unification of reason and understanding has unique epistemological importance, for it permits us to see theoretical knowledge as thoroughly dialectical.* At the same time, Hegel renounces Fichte's separation of epistemology from ontology and charges him with recognizing "the finite spirit alone, and not the infinite" and with failing to "attain the idea of reason as the perfected, real unity of subject and object."[46]

At the same time, the import of Fichte's stance for Hegel's own intellectual advance should not be diminished. The *Grundlage der Gesamten Wissenschaftslehre* were first published in 1794. It is not difficult to imagine the young Hegel digesting Fichte's groundbreaking reflections in Bern, Frankfurt, or later in Jena. I have no intent to reduce the richness and complexity of the wide-ranging discourse of that time. Nor do I intend to diminish the impact on Hegel on behalf of Schelling, Herder, and the Romantics (especially Hölderlin's *Ur-teilung*), whose interests were, to the one or the other degree, revolving around similar issues. Finally, I do grant that from a systematic dialectical standpoint Fichte's arguments (especially compared to the systematic structure of the *Science of Logic*) may seem unfinished or ambiguous.[47] A detailed examination of Fichte from such a perspective is yet to be attempted. It must be, however, beyond question that Fichte's anticipation of Hegel is at times astonishing. The cardinal methodological ideas that will later become the center of Hegel's attention are clearly and decisively put forward in the *Wissenschaftslehre*. Pressing forward a dialectic that is more substantial and far more reaching than Kant's, Fichte essentially "discovered the method of speculative thinking, which ten years later received the name

46 Hegel, HP3, 499; VGP3, 408, 409.

47 The more vulnerable is Fichte to analytically oriented criticism. See, for example, W.M. Martin, *Idealism and Objectivity,* esp. 118–41.

'dialectical method.'"[48] Addressed in a reverse way, Fichte's dialectic may be seen as the "limitative dialectic"[49] of the human subject (as opposed to the speculative Hegelian dialectic, which is based on a circularly presupposed actual infinity). By laying specific weight on the finitude and limitedness of self-consciousness, Fichte's dialectic is non-metaphysical[50] and may thus offer identifiable advantages when addressed from our contemporary viewpoint. It is not by accident that Hegel saw Fichtean philosophy as containing "nothing speculative."[51]

Undoubtedly, both Schelling and Hegel are indebted to Fichte to a much greater degree than it is usually believed or they themselves admit. Advancing the Kantian dialectic in a decisively new way, Fichte both anticipated and stimulated[52] the development of German idealism toward Hegel, and later toward Marx. Regrettably, this issue is rarely addressed with regard to Fichte as its initiator. In most cases, his dialectic is addressed as a part of his own system alone. As a rule, Fichte is also underestimated in research on dialectics in general.

The underestimation of Fichte's contribution does not have to do only with the philosopher himself, but also with the specific understanding of dialectic and the role of contradiction for each commentator. Let me briefly address only one such example. In his general discussion of Fichte's dialectic[53] Lauth duly identifies the origin of contemporary dialectic in Fichte. However, Lauth's understanding of dialectic preconditions a specific unfolding of

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48 T.M. Seebohm, "Fichte's Discovery of Dialectical Method," in D. Breazeale, and T. Rockmore, eds., *Fichte. Historical Contexts/Contemporary Controversies*, p. 17.

49 W. Janke, *Vom Bilde des Absolutes. Grundzüge der Phänomenologie Fichtes* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1993), pp. 187–212.

50 See also W.S. Hartkopf, *Die Dialektik Fichtes als Vorstufe zu Hegels Dialektik*, p. 205.

51 Hegel, HP3, 504.

52 L. Zhixue, "Methodologische Probleme der ersten *Wissenschaftslehre* Fichtes," in E. Fuchs and I. Radrizzani, eds., *Der Grundansatz der ersten Wissenschaftslehre Johan Gottlieb Fichtes*, p. 115.

53 R. Lauth, "Der Ursprung der Dialektik in Fichtes Philosophie," in R. Lauth, *Transzendentale Entwicklungslinien*, pp. 209–26.

his argument that leads to rather destructive than constructive conclusions. Lauth advances the claim that Fichte is ontologically more realistic than Schelling, Hegel and even materialism: Fichte preserves some independence of matter as a "moment of the reflection process,"[54] but such independence is lost in each of the others. Further, Lauth argues that in both Kant and Hegel, contradictions have an ontological invariability, with each previous one leading to a new one, and such stance leads to the "abolition of rationality." Contrary to that, in Fichte it is the contradictions that are "abolished." Not only does this difference bring Fichte into close affinity with Marx[55] (similarly understood by Lauth in a peculiar way) but it also makes Fichte's dialectic stand "in opposition"[56] to the versions of dialectic that are advanced by Kant and Hegel. It is not my objective to argue in detail concerning Lauth's claims about dialectic, contradiction or German idealism. It is obvious, however, that Lauth's approach renounces the logical continuity of the discourse, and his negative interpretation juxtaposes Fichte to, thereby isolating him from, the development of German idealism. Lauth thus effectively fails to instill appreciation for both the advances *and* limitations of Fichte's dialectic.

Finally, it must be said that Fichte himself supplies ample evidence for the ambiguous interpretation of his dialectic. He does not speak extensively about the dialectical method he employs. Further, he does not explicitly address the question of contradiction *qua* contradiction. This constitutes a sharp difference from Hegel. Fichte, instead, chooses to talk more about antithesis, opposition, and contradictions that are overcome. Such vagueness offers ground for interpreting his method as a "method of contradiction"[57]

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54 *Ibid.*, p. 216.

55 In more detail, see the essay "Das materielle und das historische Moment im dialektischen Grundansatz der Transzendentalphilosophie nach Fichte," in *ibid.*, pp. 411–21. On the general relation between Marx and Fichte, see also T. Rockmore, *Fichte, Marx and the German Philosophical Tradition* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1980).

56 R. Lauth, *op. cit.*, p. 222.

57 W. M. Martin, *Idealism and Objectivity*, pp. 100–17.

as well as a "method of non-contradiction."[58] Rolf-Peter Horstmann argues that the "limitation" in the positing of consciousness is Fichte's way of demonstrating the possibility of the coexistence of the I and not-I and, thus, of avoiding contradiction.[59] Similarly, Evald Ilyenkov (who presents, in my opinion, by far the best interpretation of contradiction in the international bibliography) shows a surprisingly cautious attitude toward Fichte's dialectic, reducing it to the role of a counterpart of Schelling's philosophy of identity. According to Ilyenkov, Fichte bounds the problem of contradiction within the I. Being unable to explain *how* A and not-A can occur simultaneously in consciousness (not just as successive predicates, as in the *Critique of Pure Reason*), and in order to avoid the confrontation with the principle of contradiction, Fichte invokes the concept of intuition, "the rights of which are higher than those of formal logic."[60] If Fichte had done so, he would have, at best, cheated on his own course of analysis. To be sure, what Fichte demonstrates is the co-existence of contradictions in one and the same subject. Contradictions in his writing produce new contradictions, and such a strategy forms the principal ground for his deduction of categories. Moreover, not only does Fichte enclose opposed forces in one and the same activity, as manifestations of one and the same mind, but he also insists that they are held simultaneously and act simultaneously.

D. *The Thing-in-itself and the Horizons of Knowledge*

I have so far analyzed the dialectical claim in Fichte's doctrine – in other words, the way the I posits the not-I. Now I will turn to the other extension of Fichte's advance over Kant. Fichte insists that it is the I, *the subject*, that posits the not-I. With respect to the *procedure* of knowledge, Fichte's step beyond Kant yielded

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58 J. Widmann, *J.G. Fichte* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1982), pp. 54–7.

59 R.-P. Horstmann, *Die Grenzen der Vernunft*, p. 126ff.

60 E. V. Ilyenkov, *Dialectical Logic,* p. 131. Ilyenkov rightfully underscores the objectivity of contradiction, yet does not caution against the danger of relapsing into a general metaphysics. See also my discussion in the chapters on Hegel.

remarkable results. However, with respect to the *source and object* of knowledge, Fichte's concept creates unsurpassable problems.

It is essential for the present discussion to position Fichte against the Kantian background. Kant had attempted to refute skepticism by separating what can be known from what cannot be known: the first involving the realm of phenomena and the second the thing-in-itself. We can know for sure about the world as it *appears* to us because we are as we are. Although only within the limits of the phenomenal world (and the structural preconditions that transcendental philosophy introduces) knowledge can nevertheless be certain. However, with relation to the world *in itself*, Kant is a skeptic, if not thoroughly an agnostic, and does not reject Hume in any other way than by redefining the conditions of knowledge through his Copernican turn. The move that saves the game for Kant is undoubtedly his articulation of the dichotomy between the thing-in-itself and the appearances. At the same time, the mere admission of the impossibility of knowledge of the thing-in-itself makes it also impossible to overcome skepticism, if not in the gnoseological, then surely in the ontological/metaphysical sense.

Kant did not consider it possible to reach further, thus the question of the source of knowledge as well as of its objectivity remained open. For even if phenomenal knowledge is absolutely certain knowledge, knowledge of *the world as such* is not. Yet this type of knowledge had been the task of all pre-Kantian philosophy. The skeptical line of attack against Kant (and later against Reinhold) is thus comprehensible, and it consists in that the correspondence of intuitions to things is presupposed by Kant rather than proven. In this respect the skeptic (e.g., Schulze) is clearly a pre-Kantian thinker, for he does not endorse the reorientation of philosophy that Kant had introduced. On its own his skeptical attack is correct, but he is arguing on a different track than Kant.

In the meantime, the respect that Kant managed to bring back to philosophy, as well as the ambiguities his system had unleashed, defined the spirited discussion that followed. Kantian philosophy was attacked from various sides. First, it was Jacobi's famous dilemma: that one cannot enter Kant's system without the thing-in-itself, but with the latter one cannot stay in Kant's

system.[61] Jacobi's criticism highlighted the ontological and epistemological equilibrium of transcendental philosophy, and his authoritative stature (much more esteemed back then than today[62]) assured that all key figures in the post-Kantian discourse kept in mind his criticism when they were reading Kant.[63] But this is only one side of the coin. Although Jacobi's criticism was "from the right," and was advocating the famous *salto mortale*, the "leap of faith," it found an unexpected ally "from the left," on the epistemological front. This ally was represented by the skeptics who were challenging Kant's response to Hume.

In sum, the skeptics were dissatisfied with Kant's rejection of Hume, and Jacobi was dissatisfied with Kant's rejection of Spinoza.[64] Thus, "Jacobi had resurrected Spinoza and meta-critique of Kant

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61 F. Jacobi, *The Main Philosophical Writings and the Novell Allwill,* transl. and introd. by G. di Giovanni (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1994), p. 336.

62 For a more detailed discussion of the influence of Jacobi in German idealism see F. Beiser, *The Fate of Reason.* (Cambridge (Mass.): Harvard University Press, 1987), pp. 44–108.

63 G. di Giovanni, "The First Twenty Years of Critique," in P. Guyer, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Kant,* p. 423. Unlike K. Ameriks, who emphasizes the importance on Reinhold, G. di Giovanni sees Jacobi as being the central influence in the unfolding debate, and argues (p. 427ff.) that Reinhold himself was influenced by Jacobi. For more detailed discussion of the same stance, see R.-P. Horstmann, *Die Grenzen der Vernunft,* pp. 53–101; R. Kroner, *Von Kant bis Hegel,* vol. 1, pp. 303ff.

64 The influence of Spinoza hovers heavily over the post-Kantian discourse but, for obvious reasons, nobody admits being a Spinozist. In *Concerning the Doctrine of Spinoza* (see Jacobi F., *The Main Philosophical Writings and the Novell Allwill,* pp. 174–251) Jacobi suspects Lessing of Spinozism. Lessing responds that "my *credo* is not in Spinoza" (p. 189). Soon after, it's Lessing's turn to ask. "Lessing: And you Jacobi, are no Spinozist? Jacobi: No, on my honor" (p. 193). It is important not to openly confess one's Spinozism. The problem with Spinoza is twofold. First, it is the problem of freedom on which Spinoza's position has always been challenged. This could be discussed as a "family dispute" but Spinoza cannot be "family" because there is another problem: that of materialism and atheism (as the negation of the transcendence of God in the eyes of many amounts to the negation of God).

had revived Hume, these monsters seemed stronger than ever. It was the task of the later idealists to slay them, to succeed where Kant had failed."[65] It must be kept in mind here that Kant's alleged "failure" was not an unwanted mistake, but a deliberate choice. Renouncing earlier metaphysics, Kant refused to get to the bottom of the innermost makeup of the universe. Yet this is exactly what the post-Kantian discussion is most concerned with in reproducing a pre-Kantian quest. Abandoning the ontological humility of their intellectual source, Kant's successors set forth to elaborate on Kant's pursuit for *unconditioned* certainty with an optimism that the patriarch of German idealism would have hardly shared. At the same time, it must be reminded that Kant's ambiguity, namely, his epistemological assertiveness, was also to blame for the advances of his followers. That assertiveness leaves open the possibility of a philosophical absolutism which is, in almost every respect, what Kant wanted to overcome.

Such is the intellectual impasse that Fichte inherits. He is under a twofold influence: he is "painfully aware of and profoundly influenced by the neo-Humean skeptics, who convinced him that Kant's philosophy, at least in its present exposition in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, ends in a skepticism which is worse than Humean."[66] Therefore, Fichte begins his first substantial philosophical essay in 1794 by noting that his reading of post-Kantian commentators demonstrates what is evident to him already, that philosophy is not yet elevated to the rank of science. "Reading the modern skeptics, in particular *Aenesidemus* and the excellent writings of Maimon, has convinced the author of this treatise of something which already appeared to be most probable, namely that despite the recent efforts of the most perspicacious men, philosophy has not yet been raised to the level of a clearly evident science" (UBW, 29, CCW, 94). Yet this is only half of the story, for Fichte never gives up the Kantian

65 See F. Beiser, "The Enlightenment and Idealism," in K. Ameriks, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to German Idealism*, p. 29.
66 *Ibid.*

quest for scientific certainty.[67] To the contrary, beginning with his own programmatic struggle against skepticism in the notorious *Review of Aenesidemus*, a work that has arguably preconditioned the discourse of German idealism,[68] Fichte proves to be the champion of anti-skeptical philosophizing. How, then, can certainty be upheld?

Fichte finds the solution to the Kantian dilemma between the Scylla and Charybdis of Skepticism and Dogmatism in the radical enhancement of the subjective side of cognition. He is the one who effectively realizes what Hegel notes about Kant's followers: the nothingness of the thing-in-itself. Thus, Fichte proceeds to explain the constitution of experience by relating it to a unifying conception of intelligence. His attack on skepticism addresses Kant from the opposite angle than skepticism. However, this approach is pressed on by Fichte to a degree which Kant himself could not have endorsed and, as a matter of fact, openly renounced. In Fichte's view,

> it is plainly the business of critical philosophy to show that we are not in need of a transition [to the object – NL]; that all that arises in our mind is to be completely explained and comprehended by the mind itself (RA, 146).

As the above passage shows, Fichte's strategy in attacking skepticism consists of emptying the thing-in-itself from any qualities and importance. On the positive side, he advances an epistemologically monistic argument that *ipso facto* commits him to a predominantly epistemological problematic.[69] This side of his philosophy

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67 "The central purpose of Fichte's Jena *Wissenschaftslehre* was to avoid the charges of subjectivism that had been leveled against Kant's philosophy in the 1780's" F. Beiser *German Idealism. The Struggle Against Subjectivism, 1781–1801*, p. 219.

68 See D. Breazeale's influential essay "Fichte's *Aenesidemus Review* and the Transformation of German Idealism," in *Review of Metaphysics*, vol. 34 (1981), pp. 545–68.

69 Cf. E. Cassirer, *Das Erkenntnisproblem in der Philosophie und Wissenschaft der Neueren Zeit. Dritter Band: Die Nachkantischen Systeme*, p. 190ff.

has been extensively argued already in the previous sections of the present work. Yet, do Fichte and the skeptic speak the same language? Here is how Fichte puts it:

> How does the critical system differ from the one which was defined above as Humean? Simply in that the latter leaves open the possibility that eventually one might still be able to go beyond that limitation of the human spirit. The critical system demonstrates instead the absolute impossibility of any such advance, and shows that the thought of a thing, which supposedly has existence [*Existenz*] and certain constitutional characteristics *in itself* and independently of any faculty of representation is a whim, a dream, a non-thought (RA, 147).

Renouncing skepticism, Fichte strikingly admits that he and the skeptic address two different worlds or two different applications of knowledge. Whereas the skeptic accepts something beyond mind, Fichte argues for the deduction of all human knowledge from spirit and, without reservation, proclaims the thing-in-self a fantasy.

The philosopher had always claimed that he continued the Kantian transcendental project throughout his works. This is not without justification. For not only does Kantian philosophy emphasize the difference between subject and object, but it also underscores their unity. Although in Kant the world as such, the object, does maintain its independent existence, the truth is the truth *of the subject*, and the object is not but what the subject knows about it. Even without the thing-in-itself, transcendental philosophy would still dictate the scope of cognition. Moreover, it aspires to do so with unquestionable certainty.

Fichte's so-called subjective idealism is not the same as Berkeley's. Fichte does not deny the *existence* of the thing-in-itself as substance; he simply excludes it from the account of objectivity. In this respect, his system differs from Kant's only quantitatively. For, not only had Kant designated the thing-in-itself as the boundary of cognition, but he also built his entire system in pursuit of cognition from within the subject. Besides the firm stand that knowledge begins with experience, and that experience is necessary, Kant presents nothing to explicate his claims. To the contrary, his first *Critique* is dedicated to the other ingredient of

knowledge, the *transcendental* component. This is not to indict Kant himself for Fichte's subjectivism, for Kant's intention is to avoid both extremes. Kant epistemologically balances rationalism and empiricism and ontologically refutes both idealism and materialism. At the same time, Kant's analysis and the clear primacy of the transcendentally interpreted rational constitution of knowledge predestines the idealistic development toward Fichte.

In Fichte's view, any relapse into the object would equal to a restoration of pre-Kantian metaphysics, resulting in the same epistemological problems that eventually led to Kant. Thus, Fichte proceeds to eliminate the remnants of the thing-in-itself that Kant had left behind. If every truth has to be deduced from and be dependent upon the knowing subject, then the notion of the thing-in-itself makes no difference. In a very substantial sense, Fichte develops the only possible path for critical philosophy. As M. Vetö argues in one of the most detailed accounts of the evolution of German idealism during the last decades, "Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre* is the completion, the perfectuation of the *theoretical* critique of pure reason."[70]

Obviously, Fichte's relation to Kant is not unambiguous either. Let us give to Caesar what belongs to Caesar. Kant maintains the notion of the thing-in-itself not simply as a notion, but also as the notion of some reality *outside* of the self that complements his epistemological project. Kant points to the subjective aspect in the process of cognition, its fundamental and constitutive nature, yet he never forgets to caution that all transcendentally deduced categories are meant only for application to some immanence. In addition, Kant clearly claims that the mind offers only the form of possible experience and that the content of experience is located *outside* the mind, being real and objective. Kant concedes that we do not know how the match between form and content occurs. Holding onto Kant's letter, at this point Fichte diverges from Kant's spirit. For Fichte, both form and content are created by the I, and are both ideal.

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70 M. Vetö, *De Kant à Schelling. Les des voies de l'idéalisme allemand*, p. 320.

> The Science of Knowledge is possible *a priori*, whether or not it is to relate to objects. The object is not *a priori*, but is first given to that science in experience; objective validity is furnished to anyone by his own consciousness of the object, which consciousness can only be postulated *a priori*, but not deduced (GGW, 253, FES, 224).

Fichte is aware of the diversion and defends himself by directly addressing it. He asks: "Did Kant really base experience, as to its empirical content, on *something different from the self*?" (ZEW, 480) Most interpreters would answer in the positive. Fichte disagrees. In his view, such response would contradict the body of Kantian philosophy:

> For a completed Idealism, the *a priori* and the *a posteriori* are by no means twofold, but perfectly unitary; they are merely two points of view, to be distinguished only by the mode of approach (EEW, 447).

That the things in themselves are making impressions on us is for Fichte a "reckless presupposition and crudest dogmatism" (ZEW, 483; SIW, 56). What in fact happens is the reverse. Sensation itself is transcendentally deduced. Fiercely attacking Jacobi, Reinhold, Schulze, Beck, and the rest of Kant's followers and commentators, Fichte repeatedly underscores the role of the subjective factor in cognition by drawing parallels between his I and Kant's transcendental unity of apperception (ZEW, 475, 503, etc). Fichte emphasizes that even the mere possibility of the sensation is also *thought of*; it is transcendental. For that, he recalls Kant's definition of sensation from B33 of the *Critique of Pure Reason* as "the capacity of receiving representations" (ZEW, 486; SIW, 58). The subjective stress that Fichte adds on Kantianism forces the philosopher to argue that the I posits even the *sensitivity*, that is, the ability to obtain ideal representations of the object. Through the sensitivity, the object is intuited: "since nothing pertains to the I except what the I posits within itself, the I must originally posit sensation within itself" (GEW, 340ff.; ODC, 252ff.). Sensation is not the expression of the appearance, but the reverse: appearance can be sensed only as a product of the self-determining I.

Of course, the question of Fichte's faithfulness to Kant or not thereof is academic. Whatever the answer may be, the fact is that

Fichte does draw from Kant, paving the path that Kant's philosophy had already outlined. However, important for my discussion here is the negative outcome of this path. The outside world does not have any cognitive importance for the Fichtean subject, and the entire universe is deduced from the I alone. In a dramatic degeneration from Kant, sensual experience in Fichte is obliterated. The acceptance of the real not-I (that which lies beyond the not-I that Fichte's subject posits) does not expand beyond a nominal acknowledgment, for each particular experience, in Fichte's view, is not an experience unless realized as such by the mind. It must be underlined from the outset that Fichte is unquestionably right in that every possible theory of objectivity is a *subjective theory* of objectivity. Yet it is an open question whether the problem of knowledge is exhausted in the commitment to a cognitive strategy that is based on the movement from mind toward the object and not vice versa.

I have already termed Fichte's approach a "cognitive monism." Adopting a cognitive monistic framework makes it possible to comprehend some of the philosopher's remarks that otherwise could have been confusing. The transcendental philosopher labels his own system *immanent* while calling dogmatism (that is, materialism) *transcendent*. In Fichte's view, there are two types of philosophical systems: those that position the I within being (*das Ich im Seienden*) and those that posit the being in the I (*das Seiende im Ich*).[71] The first is dogmatic and transcendent. The second is critical and immanent. Once the reality of all knowledge is reduced to its ideal side and explained via the ideal subject, the resulting doctrine is certainly immanent to its origin, whereas the opposite approach accepts a reality that *transcends* such origin. Therefore, Fichte finds it possible to state:

> In the critical system, a thing is what is posited in the I; in the dogmatic, it is that wherein the I is itself posited: critical philosophy is thus *immanent*, since it posits everything in the I; dogmatism is *transcendent*, since it goes on beyond the I (GGW, 120; FES, 117).

71 Cf. also M. Heidegger, *Die Philosophie des deutschen Idealismus*, p. 127.

Transcendental philosophy is supposed to unite both immanence and transcendence. Fichte claims that Kantian transcendental idealism is equally empirical realism, for "it admits and proves that when the understanding speaks of a thing-in-itself, it must speak so, and it is totally right: that this in-itself is only in a certain sense and through the concealment of its principle, but not as a truthful and steady in-itself" (EVW, 59). Fichte's appropriation of Kant at this point is, at best, controversial. Nevertheless, one must remember that Fichte renounces the *cognitive importance* of the thing-in-itself rather than the thing-in-itself *per se*. Therefore, he continues: "In experience a thing-in-itself is given; there is no doubt about that; it is a different question, however, what should the experience itself produce, whether it is absolute knowledge" (EVW, 59).

By preserving the ontological validity of the thing-in-itself, Fichte attempts to steer a middle course between materialism and idealism, accusing them both of failure to unite matter and spirit, freedom and necessity (EEW, 431), aspiring to stand above such division and attain absolute knowing.[72] In fact, he refutes the one for the sake of the other. Although the initial claim is that transcendental idealism is not equal to ordinary idealism, Fichte does demonstrate clear preference for the latter and vigorous aversion to its alternative, to realism, especially when such a standpoint is monistically grounded, like in Spinoza's doctrine.

According to Fichte, the problem with natural philosophers is generally that for them, "nature is a ready-made absolute being

72 The aspiration for absolute knowing in the metaphysical sense is only implicitly present in Fichte's early writings. It appears toward the end of the 1790 and becomes explicit in the 1804 version of the *Wissenschaftslehre*. In my view, Fichte's evolution has to do with the shortcomings of his earlier doctrine, especially as these are brought up by Schelling (see my discussion in the second part of this chapter). On the epistemological aspect of absolute knowing in Fichte, see esp. H. Radermacher, *Fichtes Begriff des Absoluten* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klosterman, 1970); on the ontological/metaphysical aspect, see Schüssler I., *Die Auseinandersetzung des Idealismus und Realismus in Fichtes Wissenschaftslehre* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klosterman, 1971).

outside God" (EVW, 23). Epistemologically, this results in the well-known difficulties of dualism. However, for Spinoza, whose approach is different, the issue is more complicated. Spinoza fuses God and nature and manages to overcome the problems of dualism, yet faces a new problem, namely, the need to account for the nature of the spirit as human or divine.

Thus, as soon as Fichte's idealism is articulated in the *Wissenschaftslehre* as the sole source of knowledge, Spinoza becomes the target of an immediate attack. For Fichte admits that Spinozism represents the only possibility to overstep his own principle[73] (GGW, 100, 122; FES, 101,119) and that, as a dogmatic doctrine, the philosophy of Spinoza is cohesive and "fully consecutive." It is not by accident that Jacobi had called the *Wissenschaftslehre* an "*inverted* Spinozism"[74] and claimed that had Spinoza detected the identity of *res extensa* and *res cogitans*, he would have become an absolute idealist. Clearly Fichte's target is not the monistic nature of Spinozism but its metaphysical ground that contravenes reason's epistemological limitations, seeking certainty outside reason itself. Besides metaphysical and religious consequences (e.g., its obvious atheistic implications) and the problems with the substantiation of freedom, Spinoza's doctrine also represents an epistemological challenge. On its own grounds, Spinozism exhibits what Fichte calls "unity of empirical consciousness." But Spinoza cannot have his cake and eat it too; he cannot be a rationalist at the same time. In Fichte's eyes, Spinoza is unable to account for "pure consciousness." This is the point where all previous dogmatism (materialism) halts, and the limitation that Fichte sees in Spinoza is the limitation of all naturalism. Naturalism is unable to offer a satisfactory account of the specificity of mind, its transcendental activity, the "pure" nature and *universality* of its

73 For a detailed and well-informed discussion, see R. Lauth, "Fichtes Sicht der Philosophie Spinozas," in R. Lauth, *Transzendentale Entwicklungslinien von Descartes bis zu Marx und Dostojewski* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1989); M. Walther, ed., *Spinoza und der Deutsche Idealismus* (Würzburg: Königshäusen und Neumann, 1992), pp. 59–107.

74 Jacobi, *The Main Philosophical Writings and the Novell Allwill*, p. 502.

constructions. In the *Grundlage*, Fichte charges Spinoza directly with this inability:

> The self must have been posited as *infinite* in one sense, and as *finite* in another. If it were posited in one and the same sense as both infinite and finite, the contradiction would be insoluble; the self would be not one but two; and there would be no way out for us but Spinoza's method, of transposing the infinite outside us. And this would leave unanswered the question (which Spinoza's dogmatism prevented him even from raising), how at least *the idea* of infinity should ever have been engendered in us (GGW, 255; FES, 226).

Fichte is well-aware of the contrast between perception and ideal representation and the limitations that empiricism faces.[75] There is no "ideal triangle" in experience, similar to what human reason is able to construct and effectively make use of. There is no "animal" but tigers, lions, etc; there is no "lion" in general, but this lion and that lion; etc. Fichte puts it straightforwardly and acutely:

> Through the observation of a lot of trees the empiricist wants to learn what a *tree* would be. But I would like to know how he would have been able to know with the very first tree that this is a tree and not, for instance, his nose.[76]

The universal nature of the mind's ideal constructions comes to direct and seemingly irreconcilable contrast with the fragmentary nature of empirical cognition. The contrast leads Fichte to argue that the concept of the tree comes from the self, not from the object. What Fichte points at is the fact that knowledge of the

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75 For an excellent treatment of this question, see R. Lauth, "Fichtes Argumentation gegen den Logischen Empirismus," in *Transzendentale Entwicklungslinien*, pp. 316–31.

76 "Der Empiriker will durch die Beobachtung einer Menge Bäume lernen, was ein *Baum* sey. Ich aber möchte wissen, wie er beim allerersten Baume hätte wissen können, daß dies ein Baum sey, u. nicht – etwa seine Nase." See *Fichtes Werke,* Akad.-Ausg. II, 6, 331. Quoted from R. Lauth, *Transzendentale Entwicklungslinien,* p. 321.

object is always *knowledge* of the object, i.e., represented in ideal form, mediated by our cognitive activity (the creation of the ideal image of the object *is* activity, and mind is *ex definitio* active), and defined by social and historical praxis. Despite the obvious merit of Fichte's approach, its limits are also obvious. Fichte's reaction to the imperfection of the empirical is one-sided, for it oversees the other aspect, namely that knowledge is not simply *knowledge* but also knowledge *of an object* to which thought is genetically related in its activity.

Paradoxically, it is nobody else than Fichte who brings forth the notion of activity as a principal constitutive act of the self. The way toward Hegel and Marx is thus paved. As Marx noted in the famous first thesis on Feuerbach, it was philosophical idealism that succeeded at grasping the active side of consciousness earlier than materialism. On the issue of activity, Fichte transcends a fundamental limitation of Spinoza, namely, that man does not simply move on the basis of given in-advance natural schemes. Man is not simply a part of nature but, in a certain sense, its creator. Man actively reorganizes nature, overcoming its passivity. The subject comes to be by transforming nature, and not by succumbing to it. This takes place in a dialectical relationship between freedom and necessity, as Hegel will later reveal. In the meantime, Fichte holds onto the universality of freedom that was set forth by Kant. In spite of that, Fichte puts forth the notion of *activity*, and this is a clear and radical step forward in comparison with Spinoza. Man is not just a passive ingredient of nature but its conqueror through his pursuits, planned in advance and ideally represented.

Fichte's notion of activity nevertheless leads to a dead end. For him, the object is always a projection of the subject. However, the object conforms to the subjectively produced contour, not because of the real facet of ideality, but because of the ideal facet of reality. This is what Fichte disregards and, at this point, his system reaches its boundaries. As mentioned above, in a very substantial sense the subject-object dialectic loses in Fichte its real dimension.[77] Once again, this is not to say that experience is eradicated in the metaphysical sense: Fichte does not just renounce the real world. The

77 Cf. also Hegel's comments above, footnotes 45, 46, and 51.

thing-in-itself is not just pronounced as a material beyond, "the thing-in-itself is … not a mistake … It is based on a not-understanding (*nicht-verstehen*) but a necessary one, and a necessary limitation of the understanding (*des Verstandes*)" (EVW, 100).

Fichte does, at least nominally, acknowledge the origin of knowledge; he does grant that "the essence of finite reason has nothing besides experience; this is what its thinking contains as its material. The philosopher necessarily stands under the same conditions; it seems therefore incomprehensible how he can elevate himself over experience."[78] However, he is unable and unwilling to make any use of this rare concession. His epistemological monism reaches to the other end, attempting to explain knowledge from knowledge itself and emptying the source of intuition from its qualities. The inability to elucidate the historical and social formation of conceptual cognition results in the typical distortion that concepts make up all reality. Fichte solves the Kantian impasse by reaching to one of the two possible extremes, the self-sufficiency of transcendental concepts. The remaining cardinal issue, however, is *what* concepts represent. This is exactly the same problem that Kant had faced. Kant had maintained that experience is also a condition for knowledge (in the form of proclamation and without being about to *ground* cognition *in* experience). In contrast, Fichte abandons the problem altogether and moves into the other direction. He pronounces reason the sole judge and producer of experience so that "the world is only the appearance of appearance, the appearance of the I, of the understanding" (TB, 423).

Along with Lauth, Pippin, Martin, and many others who highlight the realistic portion of Fichte's philosophy, I grant that "the *Wissenschaftslehre* is only methodical, not metaphysical idealism."[79] Albeit ontologically correct, such an assessment, however, does not change much. A purely subject-oriented outlook sadly complements Fichte's dialectical insistence. One cannot but agree with Ilyenkov: "Fichte freed himself from the Kantian form of antinomies but reproduced them all intact in the form of contradictions

78 In *Werke,* Akad.-Ausg., I, 4, 188. Cited from R. Lauth, *op. cit.,* p. 316.
79 R. Lauth, *op. cit.,* p. 379.

within the very concept of 'activity.' The problem was simply transferred to the sphere of the individual psyche and so made completely insoluble."[80]

Noteworthy in this respect is Fichte's reaction to Schelling's intellectual evolution. The more Schelling relapses into philosophy of nature, even in a peculiar transcendental sense, the more Fichte opposes Schelling. Fichte sees in Schelling's philosophy of nature only the negative,[81] namely, that "his starting point is . . . the entirely blind and fully trusting empiricism" (BBW, 396). Fichte's alternative, however, consists in a reiteration of his own overstretched interpretation of Kant: "Reality must in no way be posited in things, but in thought and its laws" (BBW, 385). Amplifying the shortcomings of empiricism, Fichte, in his advance against Schelling is in many respects effective; yet his approach is based on his own one-sidedness. That is, Fichte remains captive to the insight that, as we will discuss below, directed Schelling away from him.[82]

Defending himself against Schelling's criticism, Fichte renounces the "ghost of subjectivism of the *Wissenschaftslehre*" that has been created in Schelling's "confused head," and counter-attacks Schelling for restoring the "dogmatism of the thing-in-itself." Fichte condemns the philosophy of identity, the

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80 Ilyenkov E. *Dialectical Logic*, p. 144. Cf. also W.M. Martin, *Idealism and Objectivity,* p. 116.

81 H. Traub has recently claimed that Fichte always wanted to write a philosophy of nature (H. Traub, "Natur, Vernunft-Natur und Absolutes. Drei Hinsichten auf den Natur-Begriff in Fichtes *Wissenschaftslehre,*" in Asmuth C., ed., *Sein – Reflektion – Freiheit,* pp. 175–90). Such claim is highly problematic, unless seen from within the bend of Fichte's transcendentalism. That is, Fichte could possibly write a philosophy of the *transcendental possibility* of nature that would be grounded on its own and not on nature itself.

82 Cf. P. Redding, *The Logic of Affect* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1999), p. 104: "In Part II of the 1794 *Foundations of the Entire Science of Knowledge* it becomes clear why intellectual intuition is so intimately connected with feelings of bodily agency." Besides overseeing the fact that the *Wissenschaftslehre* is through and through transcendental in a more radical (and remote from intuition) sense than Kant's first *Critique*, this approach leaves the quarrel between Fichte and Schelling inexplicable.

idea that reason is supposedly absolutely "one and identical to itself" ("*eine und sich selbst gleich*" – BBW, 388), and stresses the impossibility of subject-object identity *outside* the subject of cognition. He warns that if Schelling's system were to be consecutively followed, "then there would remain no God but nature, and no morality out of the appearances of nature" (BBW, 404). The more nature is resurrected, the more natural necessity opposes freedom, the more matter is opposed to spirituality, and nature itself is opposed to God.

Schelling's resurrection of the object as thing-in-itself along with the claim for absolute knowing leaves no space for transcendence. His appropriation of Kant is an attempt that is the exact opposite of Fichte's. Fichte's epistemological reproach in the annihilation of the thing-in-itself, while radicalizing the Kantian *démarche*, permits him to remain metaphysically realistic and to let the absolute remain beyond rational philosophical discourse. Fichte thus insists that in any case, knowledge of the absolute is not and cannot be the absolute.[83] The philosopher raises here the same objection against Schelling that Schelling will later raise against Hegel.

In all versions of the *Wissenschaftslehre*, Fichte, with the same strength, attempts to construct experience on the basis of the I grasped in intellectual intuition. That is, his justified criticism against natural philosophy is negatively counter-balanced by his own persistence on the one side of transcendental consciousness, namely, the purity of its ideal constructions. On that, he amplifies rather than solves the Kantian dilemma discussed in Chapter 1.

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83 We read along with P. Grosos: "Donnant au savoir son unité formelle, Fichte, comme Schelling et contre Jacobi, ouvre la voie de la science, sans se limiter à un pur sentiment, alors véritable défaite de la pensée; mais en reconnaissant que le savoir absolue n'est pas pour autant un savoir de l'Absolu, Fichte, contre Schelling et cette for avec Jacobi, limite de façon critique les possibilités mêmes du savoir afin, en un geste très Kantien "d'obtenir une place de la croyance." P. Grosos, *Système et Subjectivité. Etude sur la signification et l'enjeu du concept de système Fichte, Hegel, Schelling* (Paris: Vrin, 1996), p. 203. See also pp. 190–216.

In his last works, and reacting to the advancements of Schelling and Hegel, Fichte undertakes repeated attempts to remedy his doctrine, shifting the focus of his system to the historical nature of knowledge. They are all elaborations from his earlier ideas, and the prevalent motif in his analysis always remains the same, namely, that all knowledge is one of a subjective construction (*ein Konstruiren*) under conditions of unrestricted freedom. The real object never attains any substantial qualification. "The claim: being in general is not absolute as of its form, but a product, an outcome, this is a claim of the *Wissenschaftlsehre*" (EVW, 42).

Fichte's evolution represents, in many respects, an entirely regressive metaphysical shift, yet quite comprehensible corollary of his earlier ideas. Fichte's doctrine evolves from the absolute positing of self-consciousness in his early period, toward a metaphysics of absolute knowing in the early 1800s, and eventually becomes a metaphysics of knowledge as the appearance of the Absolute in the last years of his activity.[84] Thus, in his last work, *The Facts of Consciousness (Die Tatsachen des Bewusstseins,* 1813), the philosopher overtly merges his epistemological stance with metaphysics by portraying knowledge in an entirely self-contained way: "Knowledge is a self-understanding of the phenomenon," a "self-observation" (TB, 404, 405). It is knowledge that knows itself and not the finite subject that obtains knowledge from the world. The human subject is only implicit and secondary. "Experience is an absolute image *(Bild)* of the formal self-understanding of the appearance" (TB, 419). Whereas Fichte's early writings had unavoidably[85] involved him in the infamous *Atheismusstreit*, his last works acquire an ambiguous theosophical coloration. Fichte talks about absolute being, and absolute knowledge, correlating now these notions with God. Thus, Fichte finds it possible to deduce the absolute and its appearance: "The Absolute is only in that it

84 For an emphasis on the rarely addressed yet striking differences in Fichte's evolution, see Baumanns P. *J.G. Fichte. Kritische Gesamtdarstellung seiner Philosophie* (Freiburg/München: Karl Albert Verlag, 1990).

85 See Cassirer's discussion in *Das Erkenntnisproblem,* pp. 155–68, esp. 163.

appears" (TB, 408) and the "appearance understands itself" (TB, 408). Therefore, "we can think of all knowledge or understanding as experience and superexperience (*Erfahrung und Übererfahrung*), sensual and supersensual, lower and higher cognition" (TB, 417).

Fichte's *démarche*, in his appropriation of the thing-in-itself, his urge for unqualified certainty, and his struggle against skepticism, determine the subsequent debate and pave the way for Schelling and Hegel. Fichte's own intellectual evolution unfolds in a parallel, but less daring pace than the evolution of the other two. To some extent, Fichte's works after 1800 remain of minor interest. The epistemological discourse that is the objective of the current treatise has already been elevated in the works of Schelling and Hegel. One might possibly trace here another particularity of individual development. Until the circle of discussion reaches a closing point, every participant can cover a finite distance. One runs out of innovative potential thereafter and is overtaken by someone else. This causes a bitter reaction. It is striking that Fichte exudes the same harshness and accusations of misunderstanding toward Schelling that Schelling will later employ against Hegel. Can such a reaction be explained as solely intellectual in nature, or could it also be psychological in origin, a reaction from someone who is abruptly overthrown from the top of philosophical pantheon?

II. Schelling: Epistemology and the Resurrection of Metaphysics

The most intelligible thing is how we determine all, merely by the law of identity; the most enigmatical is how we can determine anything beyond this law!
Schelling, Philosophical Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism

Fichte defended transcendental philosophy from the skeptical attack and underscored its epistemological assertiveness. Concurrently, by essentially denying the Kantian dualism, he amplified the issue of the real source of knowledge. It has been argued above that the one step is based on the other. Once Fichte's proximity and distance from Kant are determined, and Fichte's progress

and limitations are taken into consideration, Schelling's reaction to and advancement beyond Fichte becomes explicable.

Schelling endorses Fichte's yearning for certainty and the Fichtean understanding of dialectic. At the same time, influenced by Jacobi and the Romantics no less than by Kant and Fichte, Schelling has doubts about the plausibility of the Kantian distinction between objectively and subjectively valid representations, especially as this was magnified in Fichte's doctrine. In Fichte, the equation I=I accentuated the cognizing subject at the expense of the empirical manifold. Distancing himself from such an extreme, Schelling takes the opposite route. He does approve transcendentalism but, driven by the problematic role of the thing-in-itself in Fichte's doctrine, Schelling complements the transcendental with the immanent in a radically new way, reversing the Fichtean subject-object identity and expanding it in order to incorporate the real object, nature. At the same time, he interprets identity as describing the constitution of the Absolute and its coming to be from within natural reality. In this he dramatically departs from Kant and Fichte, turning epistemology into metaphysics of a pre-Kantian type.

Hegel sarcastically, yet not without reason, remarked that Schelling had been educating himself in public.[86] In contrast to Hegel, Schelling became famous very early in his career, before even turning twenty. Until his early thirties, not only does Schelling write and publish a lot, but he also changes his philosophical stance constantly, making it somewhat complicated to classify his ideas. At least four periods in the philosopher's intellectual evolution can be discerned, with each subsequent period being the consequence of the perspectives enclosed in the preceding one.[87] The first phase covers the early works until 1800. During that time, Schelling appears as a disciple of Fichte and

86 Hegel, HP3, 513; VGP3, 421.

87 See also N. Hartmann, *Die Philosophie des Deutschen Idealismus,* pp. 112ff. Hartmann counts the 1800 *System* as an independent phase, and distinguishes five philosophical periods in Schelling, characteristically calling them "neither simply five parts of one system, nor simply five systems."

replicates all the gains and shortcomings of Fichte's philosophy. Being from the start much more interested in nature, he exhibits an ambiguous faithfulness to Fichte, which culminates in the 1800 *System of Transcendental Idealism*. That work, a systematic, detailed and splendidly written account of the relation between the subject and object, with the former coming out of the latter, is a transitory stage from Fichtean influence to Schelling's emancipated philosophical doctrine. The *System* is as encompassing as it is important for Schelling's further quests. It is argued, and not without justification, that the philosopher never moved beyond it completely.[88] The *System* contains both the Fichtean subjective identity of the I with itself as well as the search for an absolute beginning, the interpretation of the I as a supra-individual and at once supra-natural entity, and the resurrection of nature combined with nature's interpretation from a transcendental standpoint.

The second period, Schelling's philosophy of identity, is articulated during the first decade of the 1800s, beginning with the 1801 *Darstellung meines Systems der Philosophie*. Restoring pre-Kantian metaphysics in a Spinozistic version of natural philosophy, the identity system reproduces the difficulty of the correlation between freedom and necessity. Schelling addresses this issue during the third, the so-called "middle-period," of his intellectual evolution, especially in the famous 1809 essay *On Human Freedom* (his last published work) and in the three versions of the *Ages of the World*. The long fourth period that follows thereafter is characterized by silence (for almost half a century, until his death in 1854, Schelling refused to publish any major work), and by an ever-increasing irrationalism with religious overtones, which the philosopher never abandons until the end of his life.

Of specific importance for the current treatise is the philosopher's stance toward traditional logic. Schelling's doubts about the law of identity date back to his early works. In his earliest writings, he explicitly addresses the issue of dialectic, mostly replicating Fichte's paradigm. In the 1800 *System*, Schelling matches

88 A. White, *Schelling: an Introduction to the System of Freedom* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983), p. 56.

the dialectical discourse with the claim of the historicity of cognition, the latter being advanced in a far more radical way than in Fichte's writings. Shortly thereafter, as Schelling's philosophy of identity generates the question of the identical nature of the absolute as oneness, dialectic retreats as the opposites rather *converge* in the absolute than they remain opposites. Schelling's dialectic resurfaces again during his middle period. *On Human Freedom* represents the absolute as being in a process of eternal dialectical becoming, and the *Ages of the World* signify Schelling's attempt to describe the inherently contradictory "situation in the Godhead before creation" (what Hegel later will rationally articulate in the *Science of Logic*). Revising his identity doctrine, Schelling now portrays a dramatic-poetic picture of God's incessant tormenting, with contradiction being its core component. Nevertheless, the moment of unity and self-identity of the absolute is prevalent in Schelling, and his endorsement of contradiction is incoherent, in contrast to the unambiguously transcendent character of the absolute. Schelling's narrative contrasts with Hegel's fully rational articulation. In Hegel, contradiction and movement are not just moments of unity and rest, but rather unity and rest are moments of contradiction and movement; and in that picture the absolute loses any traits of transcendence.

The above introduction outlines the main issues that will be discussed in more detail in the remaining part of this chapter. I will maintain a dynamic approach to Schelling. However, because of the particularities of the philosopher's intellectual evolution, some issues discussed in the first two sections will be readdressed in the last two.

A. *Philosophy as Scientific System in the Early Schelling*

As a disciple of Fichte and elaborator of Kant, the early Schelling endorsed the principle of scientific certainty as the result of organically assembled knowledge, repeatedly stressing that "philosophy is a *science*" (UM, 89; STI, 342), an inquiry that can produce credible knowledge. But in order to do so philosophy must be articulated as a unified system, like an organism which is made not simply from independent parts but from members that find meaning in their inclusion in the whole and vice versa: the system

is conceivable as a unity of diverse constituents. Such is the true nature of philosophy as the science of knowledge. Knowledge can only claim to be scientific if it is to be exhibited in a system of interrelated propositions. "There is a *system* in our knowledge, that is, it is a whole which is self-supporting and internally consistent with itself" (STI, 352). Thus, philosophy is a synthetic activity of thought, the inquiry that demonstrates the unity of multiplicity or expresses the latter through the former.

Further, philosophy represents the search for the *unconditional* principle of knowledge. Therefore, it pursues not any system, but a system of *ultimate* principles, a meta-system or a system that will provide the principles for any other possible knowledge. There exists a specific difference between philosophy and other sciences. In obtaining knowledge, other sciences rely on principles upon which they do not reflect. Based itself on other knowledge, their knowledge is conditional. If philosophy were to be conditioned by the principles of another discipline, then philosophy would be a conditioned discipline. But philosophy is by definition the reverse, the conditioning discipline, the crowning of all knowledge and, therefore, cannot rely on a higher-level science. Philosophy is itself that science, the reflection upon the final principles of knowledge and the pursuit of ultimate and irrefutable certainty. Thus, the system of philosophy must contain the grounding of its own subsistence; in other words, a "system of knowledge must *lie within itself*" (STI, 351, 359). In this sense, as the ultimate science, transcendental philosophy must unite form and content of knowledge. In Schelling's grasp, transcendental philosophy contains the principles of all other sciences and is a sort of meta-logic or meta-science, "a propaedeutic of all philosophy (*Philosophia prima*) or, better still, theory (science) of all science, archscience, or science *κατ'εξοχήν,* since it is supposed to condition all the other sciences" (UM, 92).

Whereas "ordinary thinking" operates through concepts, transcendental philosophy reflects upon those concepts; it suspends the mechanism of ordinary mind and "attains to the concept of a concept" (STI, 344). Transcendental philosophy does not deal with specific constructions of intuitions, but "the act of construction itself, which is an absolute internal thing" (STI, 349). The subject itself is the object of transcendental philosophy. The latter

is "knowledge about knowledge" (AE, 345) or "a system of knowledge in general" (PB, 330; AE, 346). Thus, philosophy is defined once again as a meta-reflection upon the constitutive principles of cognition, the laws of the mind. These must be grasped in their purely logical aspect and must possess universal validity. Schelling seeks knowledge in the intersubjective sense or principles "by which all individual knowledge is determined" (STI, 357). In this sense, the object of philosophy, as "the original form of all science" (UM, 101), is at the same time the original genesis of consciousness. In his *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature (1797)*, Schelling calls philosophy "natural science of our mind" (IPN, 39).

So far Schelling closely, almost verbatim, follows Fichte. The grounding principle(s) of knowledge must be deduced without ontological contentions. These have supposedly been settled by Fichte's interpretation of Kant and his subjective identity proposition. It is worth reminding once again that Fichte had upheld and underscored the pursuit for certainty. Yet unqualified certainty is metaphysical certainty, and if epistemology is dragged to the edge, it cannot but merge with metaphysics. Fichte's own evolution toward absolute knowing and knowledge of the absolute in the early 1800s is indicative of that predicament. Schelling follows this line of reasoning from early on. From his first writings, he noticeably emphasizes the metaphysical aspect of cognition, even though he stands on Fichte's side and claims that the transcendental philosopher must raise himself above the ontological distinction between dogmatism (materialism) and idealism.[89]

Schelling is looking for the *absolutely* highest principle of knowledge, that is, one which is identical to itself. With that goal in mind, he endorses Fichte's insight that "*the principle of being and thinking is one and the same*" (IP, 163). Unlike Fichte, however, Schelling emphasizes the ontological side of this identity and lengthily discusses Spinoza (toward whom the young philosopher demonstrates a far more tolerant attitude than Fichte). According to Schelling, to look for an unconditional in the object is the principle of dogmatism. An object cannot be subject, but presupposes

89 For a discussion see, J. Esposito, *Schelling's Idealism and Philosophy of Nature* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1977), esp. pp. 31–79.

a subject, "no object ever realizes itself . . . never determines its own necessity" (IP, 164,165). At the same time, the search for an unconditional principle means that we must "*find something that cannot be thought of as an object*" (IP, 166). In the course of knowledge, this something never becomes the object of knowledge because *it* itself is always behind knowledge. The young thinker finds what he is looking for in consciousness, the "I am because I am." Schelling's grounding principle originates in Fichte, namely, in the identity of the I with itself. However, Schelling's emphasis on the unconditional ontological facet deviates from Fichte. Not only is the derived knowledge accentuated as *absolute* knowledge, but the early Schelling also underlines the *absolute* nature of the subject and identifies it in a number of passages with God. In comparison, one can remember that Fichte's emphasis during the same period is on the certainty of the finite subject (not by accident, in 1799 Fichte was accused of atheism).

It has already been discussed with regard to Fichte that the first principle of knowledge is something that knowledge can be reduced to, or explained from, but the principle itself cannot be proven on reflective grounds. If the understanding of the self cannot be expounded via reflection, it is grasped intuitively. For Schelling, "*the I is determined for itself as mere I in intellectual intuition*" (IP, 181). Self-identity is "something that cannot be thought of as a thing," it can only be intuited. Furthermore, intuition is related to consciousness itself, not to the object outside consciousness. Schelling underscores this moment. "In contrast to sensory intuition, which does not appear as a producing of its object, and where the intuiting itself is therefore distinct from the intuited, and intuition of the above type will be called *intellectual intuition*" (AE, 369). The I intuits itself and not the affection of the thing-in-itself. This latter is still bracketed out by the young Fichtean. The split occurs *within the I*, and intuition is intellectual by the definition of the transcendental argument.

Intuition is a central notion in Schelling's philosophy. As to whether he only replicates Fichte, recent scholarship remains in disagreement. Several commentators argue that it is Schelling who suggested the idea of intuition to Fichte. In fact, the more Schelling's understanding of the subject gains ontological meaning (as it is acknowledged in his later works), the more important

the role of intuition becomes. Intuition comes to be the ultimate organ of philosophizing, in many respects substituting rational discourse. I will return to this issue later on. For now, it is worth mentioning that the early Schelling concedes the affinity of the initial principle with Descartes' *cogito* and reproduces Fichte's criticism about the priority of the intuitively grasped existence as compared to the thinking self. In his later period, Schelling will resolutely renounce Descartes' reduction to the *cogito* and ontologically ground the I as stemming from God.

Let us now recapitulate. The young Schelling's understanding of the philosophical system of scientific knowledge is fundamentally similar to Kant and Fichte and at the same time includes the seeds of his own later evolution. Schelling endorses the explanatory goals, systematic methods and first principles of Fichte's project and reproduces the dialectical impulse. However, his own intentions do not exactly match Fichte's. Like Fichte, Schelling aspires to present the "whole of philosophy" as a "system." Unlike Fichte, he stresses the ontological-metaphysical facet of knowledge and expands the subject matter in order to include nature as well. Without abandoning the transcendental project, Schelling aspires to provide proof of the system:

> "not merely in general, but in actual fact, that is, though the real extension of its principles to all possible problems in regard to the main objects of knowledge," more exactly, depict it as a "*graduated sequence* of intuitions whereby the I raises itself into the highest power of consciousness" (STI, 330–1).

Fichte had been expressively uninterested in this "graduate sequence of intuitions." In his early Fichtean period, Schelling's concern with the object is more manifest than Fichte's toward it but it is still rather symbolic. The philosopher is predominantly interested in the *possibility* of the object rather than the object itself. In his transitory *System of Transcendental Idealism* of 1800 (which is equally Fichtean as it is non-Fichtean), the "real extensions" format the counterpart of transcendental philosophy and are provided by the philosophy of nature. Schelling will step even further thereafter and merge the two in his infamous resurrection of natural philosophy. The issue of the resurrection of natural philosophy will be extensively treated in the last two sections of

this chapter. In order to understand it in greater depth, however, I will first examine Schelling's treatment of formal logic.

B. *Identity, Logic and Contradiction in the Early Schelling*

Philosophy has been determined as the unambiguous logic of cognition *par excellence*. Dissatisfied with *formal* logic, however, Schelling clearly separates formal logical reasoning from philosophical. His assessment of the relation between philosophy and logic can be exhibited through his analysis of the identity proposition. Sharing the stance of critical philosophy, he relates logic to subjectivity and challenges traditional formal logic by showing the conditional nature of logical axioms. With a forcefulness equal to Fichte's, the young Shelling portrays the dialectical nature of the mind. In his early works (see esp. IP, 217ff.), Schelling approves and discusses in detail Fichte's dialectical explorations of the relationships between the subject and its contradictory predicates (the movement from A=A to A=B, A=C, etc). Elsewhere he repeats Fichte's derivations almost verbatim: following the absolute positing, the I becomes unequal to itself. But, "if the I is not= I, then A=not-A, and if A=not-A, then I=not-I" (UM, 98). As Schelling's analysis closely follows Fichte's, what must be reiterated is what was discussed with regard to Fichte, namely, that these explorations represent a sharp challenge to the philosophical import of the law of identity.

As it was the case with Fichte, Schelling, too, is far from thrilled with the law of identity: "the form of identity does not at all determine any object as such" (IP, 230). Dragged all the way from precritical Kant, and through Fichte, this idea could not be put more clearly. Thus, the proposition A=A is "evident and certain" but only as a conditioned, not as a conditioning. For it is certain "regardless to whether A is something really existing, or merely imagined, or even impossible." (STI, 362). Schelling poses the same challenge to formal logic as Fichte before him: "If A exists, then it is equal to itself. But where does it come from?" (STI, 358). The proposition A=A presupposes a thinking subject which is simultaneously its own object. The "supreme formal principle, A=A is indeed only possible thought the *act* expressed in the proposition I=I – through the act of thinking that becomes an object to itself and is identical with itself" (STI, 372). The self, not logic, must

be accepted as an epistemological starting point. With regard to further derivations of logic, it is philosophy, the self-examination of mind, which commands formal logic, not the reverse. For:

> the proposition A=A appears identical, but it might very well also have a synthetic meaning, if the one A, say, were opposed to the other. One would thus have to substitute in place of A a concept expressing a *fundamental duality within the identity* and *vice versa* (AE, 372).

The identity of self-consciousness lies on the ground of its own contradictory activity, and the original thesis and antithesis, the A and not-A, "is the problem of *all* synthesis in philosophy" (IP, 222). The nucleus of philosophical inquiry is to unite the antithetical principles, and the possibility of their *synthesis* determines for Schelling the possibility of all philosophy. Such is the way of creating what Kant called *a priori* synthetic judgments.

The problem of the relation of philosophy to logic (the perception of philosophy as meta-logic) is clearly put forward by the early Schelling. This time, however, it is not original, but a replica of Fichte's analysis. Respectively, the same question that was addressed to Fichte could now be addressed to Schelling. It pertains to the logical characteristics of such activity, the deliberate portrayal of the features of meta-logical reflection as meta-*logical*. Schelling does not address this issue. He stops exactly where Fichte had stopped and expresses no deliberate intention to challenge the principles of logic, but rather excludes them from the account of truth. Like Fichte, Schelling views contradictions as "soluble," "resolvable," etc., as an unavoidable but predominantly negative cognitive side-effect.

Schelling, like Fichte, does separate philosophical reflection from formal logic, and thus elaborates his arguments in a form that cannot be seized by formal logic. That is, the question of moving beyond the scope of formal logic is addressed indirectly yet *de facto*. Schelling's entire exposition consists of a permanent "positing" and "counter-positing," of moving through opposite stances. Being on the edge of a significant cognitive problem, the young philosopher wonders: "The most intelligible thing is how we determine all, merely by the law of identity; the most enigmatical is how we can determine anything beyond this law!" (PB: 310).

An explicit dialectic also permeates the analysis of the self in Schelling's *1800 System*. Self-consciousness (the I) is a "conflict of absolutely opposed activities" (STI, 397). Moreover, the conflicting activities are primary whereas the identity of the self is secondary. In Schelling's view,

> the identity expressed in self-consciousness is not an original identity but a created, mediated one. What is original is the conflict of opposing directions in the I; the identity is the resultant of this. Originally, indeed, we are conscious only of identity, but enquiry into the conditions of self-consciousness had served to show that such identity can only be a mediated, synthetic one (STI, 392).

Furthermore, in the *1800 System*, Schelling attaches to the self an intrinsic historicity that differentiates him from Fichte. In the *Wissenschaftslehre*, Fichte had first deduced the principles of knowledge and only then examined their historical-phenomenological mirroring. The historicity of the *System of Transcendental Idealism* is more drastic. Without abandoning the supposition of the absolute self, which the result of an act of intellectual intuition, Schelling does not axiomatically deduce the self but instantaneously traces its historical evolution. Thus, the mind is perceived as inherently coming-to-be, made up from opposing forces, formatted as a result of contradictory tendencies. It is not identity but contradiction which is its primary constitutive ingredient. The nucleus of Schelling's inquiry is how activities of opposing directions can be united in one and the same subject; they cancel one another, "and yet neither is possible without the other" (STI, 393).

The acting I is at the at once unlimited *and* limiting itself through a not-I which is opposed to the I. First, the I identifies itself as a limited I. Second, by this mere limitation, the I surpasses its limit for it already presupposes unlimitedness in order to limit itself. Therefore, third, "the I is unlimited as I only in that it is limited" and, in a reverse way, "it is limited through the fact that it is unlimited" (STI, 382, 383). Respectively, the I is defined by Schelling as finite, but its finitude is a condition of its infinity and *vice versa*. Finally, the I is determined as an eternal self-restricting and going beyond its boundaries, with both of these actions happening simultaneously. These boundaries are at once

real (that is, independent of the I in order to bound it) and ideal (that is, dependent on the I, otherwise the I cannot posit itself as bounded). One cannot avoid noticing how Schelling's dialectical interplay unfolds in expressions that directly anticipate Hegel. Some passages will be repeated almost verbatim in the *Encyclopedia* and the *Science of Logic*.

Of course, the above argument unveils only the categorical specificity of human rationality by which infinity can be recognized as related to finitude (respectively, limitedness to unlimitedness, part to whole, etc.). It is therefore vital not to equate the exhibition of contradictory nature of finite rationality with the search for absolute truth. The latter would turn critical philosophy (philosophy as metalogic, that is, the examination of the *modus operandi* of finite rationality) to pre-critical metaphysics. A parallel example can be easily provided: the I posits itself as non-divinity, but by positing itself as such, the I surpasses its non-divinity, and vice versa, hence it is divine and non-divine at the same time. It is not difficult to discern here the seeds of Schelling's, and especially Hegel's, later reasoning. To be fair to Schelling, he always remained aware of the gap between finite and infinite reason, and the gap between logic and existence. Thus, he never tried to articulate the divine problematic in a purely rational way, even in his later period when he resurrected metaphysics.

Up until the *System* of 1800, Schelling claims to be elaborating the transcendental standpoint, and to this extent one may espouse his dialectical explorations. For as long as he demonstrates the mutual dependence and change of contradictory concepts within *finite* consciousness, his account is constructive, appealing, and even more explicatory than Fichte's, to whom the fundamental idea of the dialectic of consciousness belongs. As it is built on Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*, Schelling's argument would be equally vulnerable to the same criticisms that were raised against Fichte, namely, the underestimation of the internal unity of consciousness with its object. Yet Schelling is well aware of this predicament, and portrays the I not as simply intentional, as oriented *toward* the object, but as coming to be *from within* the object while at the same time transforming the object. In this way, the self unearths a thoroughly dialectical character in its activity, which is at once ideal and real.

C. *The Twofold Nature of Schelling's Transcendental Philosophy*

The same relationship of faithfulness and patricide that Fichte maintained toward Kant will now be reproduced by Schelling toward Fichte, a relationship which culminates in the *System of Transcendental Idealism*, before finally breaking down a year later with the publication of Schelling's *Darstellung meines Systems der Philosophie*. Several commentators suggest that the actual split between Fichte and Schelling occurred long before it is usually believed, that Schelling targeted even his *Philosophical Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism* at Fichte,[90] and that Fichte responded by targeting his 1797 version of the *Wissenschaftslehre* at Schelling.[91] Whatever the precise time of his divergence was, it is indisputable

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90 A.V. Guliga, *Nemetskaya Klassicheskaya Filosophia* [*German Classical Philosophy*], p. 186. That dogmatism is represented by Spinoza is clear. However, writes Guliga, under "criticism" Schelling does not have in mind the *Critique of Pure Reason,* which is for him canonical, but Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*. X. Tilliete seems more balanced in arguing that the letters do not constitute an unswerving distancing, but rather "the prelude of the adieu to criticism." See X. Tilliette, *Schelling: Une Philosophie en Devenir. I. Le Système Vivant 1794–1821* (Paris: Vrin, 1970), p. 91.

91 I. Görland, *Die Entwicklung der Frühphilosophie Schellings in der Auseinandersetzung mit Fichte.* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klosterman, 1973) pp. 51ff.; W. Schmied-Kowalzwik, "Das Problem der Natur. Nähe und Differenz Fichtes und Schellings," in *Fichte Studien*, vol. 12 (1997), pp. 211–33; S. Hoeltzel, "Idealism and the Ground of Explanation: Fichte and Schelling, 1794–7," in D. Breazeale, and T. Rockmore., eds., *New Essays on Fichte's Later Jena* Wissenschaftslehre, pp. 261–78; Hoeltzel (p. 271ff.) characteristically names one paragraph of his essay "Fichte contra Schelling, 1797". R. Lauth, in his *Die Entstehung von Schellings Identitätsphilosophie in der Auseinandersetzung mit Fichtes Wissenschaftslehre* (Freiburg: Karl Alber, 1975), presents a balanced and well informed account according to which Fichte's criticism of early Schelling is in the first instance "methodical" (p. 34), but Fichte's writings incorporate a number of arguments that were first introduced by Schelling. Fichte's lectures at the end of 1798 are critical toward Schelling's early Natural Philosophy (62ff.), stressing the role of the *a priori* derivation and the dependence of nature thereupon. The tension rises until the final break takes place with the publication of Schelling's *Darstellung*.

that Schelling's early works are characterized by a twofoldness and uncertainty toward nature (what was *de facto* obliterated in Fichte's doctrine). The ambiguity is expressed in both Schelling's *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature* (1797) and especially in the *On the World Soul* (1799). Similarly, the *System of Transcendental Idealism* that comes one year later contains both Fichtean and apparent non-Fichtean elements. Although it is difficult to unequivocally classify that work, I believe that despite its obvious divergence from Fichte, the underlying assumptions are that of transcendental idealism and, thus, overall Fichtean.[92] This having been said, one must never forget that the subjective side of Fichte's subject-object identity did not satisfy Schelling from the very beginning. Carrying this dissatisfaction into the *System*, Schelling seeks to portray a balanced relationship between the object of intuition and the subject and, respectively, between philosophical knowledge and knowledge that is provided by other sciences, in particular, natural science.

Fichte had elaborated on the first two Kantian *Critiques*, but, despite the fact that he allowed the possibility of a *Critique of Judgment*, he never expanded his analysis. Nature is in fact absent from his work. Schelling changes the accent. As Horstmann puts it, while Fichte represents the "anti-skeptical" evolution of Kant, Schelling's philosophy amounts to the rehabilitation of teleology.[93] Without challenging the authority of the *Wissenschaftslehre*, Schelling expands his analysis beyond Fichte, tracing the genesis of consciousness as coming out of nature, thus pursuing a different explanation of the notion of the *a priori*. Schelling sets the task of revealing the transcendental from within the empirical. Whereas the object of intuition is in Fichte's works reconstructed only at the very end and occupies just a few pages (from some editions of the *Wissenschaftslehre* it is entirely absent), in Schelling it occupies a central place. It is the independence of nature that

92 Even the title, X. Tilliette argues, demonstrates the respect for Kant and the replication of Fichte. See Tilliette X. *Schelling: Une Philosophie en Devenir*, vol. I, p. 185.

93 R.-P. Horstmann, *Die Grenzen der Vernunft*, pp. 131–64.

designates Schelling's point of dissidence with Fichte.[94] Schelling rehabilitates the manifold, and sets it forth as the presupposition of knowledge, which is *post factum* grasped in the transcendental activity of consciousness. It is in this way that the systematic task of philosophy becomes more than the mere deduction of categories and includes the deduction of the spiritual history of consciousness (viz. Fichte's "pragmatic history of mind") *from within the otherness of consciousness.*

Schelling's departure from Fichte is a work in progress. The 1800 *System* could be still (mis) conceived as exposing pure transcendental consciousness in the intersubjective sense. After the publication of Schelling's work, Fichte did not reject the *System*, but became even more concerned. This is not without reasons. Schelling's work can be interpreted as an elaboration of the *Wissenschaftslehre*, however loosely attached to it. The author's closeness to Fichte is obvious. Just as it was the case in the *Wissenschaftslehre*, in the *System of Transcendental Idealism* the real object is suspended, and its existence is called "a mere prejudice" (STI, 344). Schelling maintains not only that there exists a world of things outside and independent of us but also that our representations are so far coincident with it and, therefore, there is "*nothing else* in things save what we attribute to them." Hence, transcendental philosophy is aimed at explaining "the possibility of experience" (STI, 347), not actual experience. The philosopher makes it clear that he endorses the thing-in-itself only nominally, not as the source of intuition, but as posited by the I. What appears to the subject as activity of the thing-in-itself is not but "the ideal self-reverting activity of the I, and this can only be presented as the negative of the other . . . The thing-in-itself is pure ideal activity, in which nothing is recognizable save its opposition to the real activity of the I" (STI, 437, 434). Schelling's ideas appear consistent with his previous writings. For already in the *Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism*, he had written that "if the thing-in-itself is to have any sense, it can only signify

94 X. Tilliette, *ibid.*, p. 192; For a good discussion, see also R. Lauth, *Die Entstehung von Schellings Identitätsphilosophie*, pp. 90ff., and especially M. Vetö, *La Fondement Selon Schelling*, 2nd ed. (Paris: L' Harmattan, 2002), Ch. 2–4.

something that is no longer an object for us, something that offers no resistance to our activity" (PB, 325–6).

In the 1800 *System*, Schelling deduces concepts that strike one as immediately related to the manifold of experience, such as matter, electricity, magnetism, etc. (It is also noteworthy that he cannot avoid the attachment to the scientific data of his time, reproducing the deficiencies that Kant himself had fallen into when he had defined the proposition that "all bodies have extension" as an *a priori* synthetic one.) However, Schelling is far from relapsing into empiricism. To the contrary, he deduces the transcendental *principles* under which mind can perceive the manifold and clarifies that if his objective were to explain nature, he would never arrive to idealism. If the objective principle, the not-I, is to be made primary, then it has to attach to itself the concept of the I, because "the concept of the subjective is not contained in that of the objective" (STI, 334). The exploration of the object is the goal of natural philosophy, whereas transcendental philosophy departs from the opposite principle, the subjective, and derives the object from there.

At the same time, Schelling's narrative is not exactly Fichtean. Schelling wants to overcome the shortcomings of the *Wissenschaftslehre*, yet without falling into dogmatism (with all the attached epithets: choosing the material over the spiritual, choosing necessity over freedom, immorality over morality, and the like). From an idealistic stance, he aspires to unite idealism and realism when he writes:

> Just as natural science brings forth idealism out of realism, in that it spiritualizes natural laws into laws of mind, or appends the formal to the material … so transcendental philosophy brings forth realism out of idealism, *in that it materializes the laws of mind into laws of nature* (STI, 352).

Between Schelling's past and future, the above passage has very rich content as it both predicts his epistemological insights as well as exhibits his metaphysical aspirations. In the first part, Schelling talks about "spiritualizing natural laws into the laws of mind." This is a resourceful vision which expresses that the mind, as a specific ideal construction of reality, comes out of reality as such. One the

other hand, this idea is expressed as a remnant of pre-critical idealistic metaphysics, which requires that the truth *must* be attached to some supra-human spiritual principle. Thus, Schelling finds it possible to claim that natural science brings "idealism out of realism." In the second part of the passage, by claiming that the mind is "materialized into the laws of nature," Schelling perceptively points at the dialectic of the mind's coming to be through the transformation of the object. In that sense, he is justified in maintaining that philosophy "brings forth realism out of idealism," for he thereby highlights the mind's productive nature: the ideal construction becomes a real creation, and the creation formats the mind itself. This is the dimension in which human intelligence comes to be – for the mind is not a mere *tabula rasa,* but is formatted through creative activity. The other aspect of Schelling's phrase is the implication that a divine mind comes to create nature directly, and this is different from the claim of the recollection of nature by finite reason.

When the two sides of Schelling's argument are combined, philosophy becomes metaphysical inquiry. If they are not, philosophy persists as critical philosophy of mind, a meta-reflection into the formation of finite reason in its activity. Both of these contours are overtly combined in Schelling's later doctrine, although the embryonic form of it is already laid out in the 1800 *System.*

In the meantime, Schelling invokes the notion of history as the means to integrate the subjective and objective by showing how intelligence comes to be. The innovation here is that intelligence comes to be not only in *social* history, but also in *natural* history. Schelling's Transcendental Idealism claims:

> give me a nature made up of opposed activities, of which one reaches out into the infinite, while the other tries to intuit itself in this infinitude, and from that I will bring forth for you the intelligence, with the whole system of presentations. Every other science presupposes the intelligence complete; the philosopher observes it in its genesis, and bring it into being, so to speak, before his eyes (STI, 427).

It is easy to see that the above constitutes a significant departure from Fichte. In Fichte's writings, one could deduce the historicity

of spirit within social history, but not natural history (perhaps, with the exception of a few implications). The issue is different in Schelling. Natural history, albeit deduced *a priori*, is an integrative part of his system. Accordingly, Schelling approaches nature and natural philosophy in a way which is much more intimate and respectful. He draws an open parallel between Nature and Intelligence, perceiving the natural philosophy as a condition of transcendental philosophy. To depict the parallelism completely, he says, "neither transcendental philosophy nor the philosophy of nature is adequate by itself; *both sciences* together are alone able to do it" (STI, 331).

The issue of relating natural and transcendental philosophy is extremely complex, and even Kant faced a variety of criticisms after the publication of his *Metaphysical Foundations of Natural Science*. If indeed Kant had made that attempt being afraid of any subjectivist interpretations of his method, one can analogously argue[95] that Schelling, by turning toward natural philosophy, struggles to move away from such subjectivism as it was expressed in the *Wissenschaftslehre*. By the same token, Schelling now shifts critical philosophy toward metaphysics. In the *System of Transcendental Idealism*, which could still be seen as parallel to Kant's *Foundations*, this turn remains only a hazardous potency of transcendentalism. It will detonate a year later.

Schelling approaches the genesis of knowledge in a thoroughly historical way and places it on its ontogenetic and phylogenetic parameters. The formation of the I is traced as an opposition between itself and the not- I, yet the latter is not right away posited by the former in its ideal form but traced as a coming-to-be unity between the subjective and the objective. The whole system of knowledge is thereby "history of consciousness" (STI, 399) and transcendental idealism in Schelling's view amounts to the

95 For a comparison between Schelling's early attempts and Kant's *Metaphysical Foundations,* see J. Esposito, *Schelling's Idealism and Philosophy of Nature,* pp. 47–79. Esposito keenly confines his argument to the period until 1801, and avoids discussing the epistemological gap between transcendental and non-transcendental natural philosophy as this is expressed in the works that follow the *System of Transcendental Idealism*.

examination of the succession of actions performed by intelligence from the lowest to the highest power. In effect, besides being initially presupposed, the subject-object identity means nothing in the meantime. Thus, the I must recollect its identity in its contradictory productivity. From there emerge Schelling's famous three *Epochs*. The possibility of the object is resurrected through a portrayal of three different periods during which intelligence arises out of nature, the subject arises out of the object, and the products of unconscious "intuition" are raised to the level of concept. The I proceeds, respectively, from unconscious intuition to reflection, and from reflection to free willing.

Fichte's identity was also seized in an act of intellectual intuition, and the combination of intuition with imagination proved to be a central tool in the construction of the possibility of the object in the *Wissenschaftslehre*. In Schelling, however, the object plays a substantial *ontological* role as the real independent arena of the coming to be of the subject. The latter is portrayed by Schelling as interplay of conscious and unconscious activities. Fichte had addressed the difference between conscious and unconscious intuition, but never fully stressed their contrast: he had no space to do so once the real object had been bracketed out. In Schelling, the accent shifts considerably. Although Schelling's underlying assumption is *self*-consciousness, or *self*-activity (and is seemingly similar to Fichte), the role of unconscious activity is spread over an entire period (the first of Schelling's three *Epochs*, which refers to the mechanical and the organic), and implicitly to the self-constitution of the subject, or the process of subjective cognition as internally related to the object. In other words, the I is not originally subject, but *becomes* subject through the object. The I is grasped as primordial activity (as in Fichte) but is explicitly elaborated (unlike Fichte) on a formatting ground that is both historical *and* natural. Thus, Schelling attempts to evade[96] the circle of reflection that Fichte faced when he came to complement his *Grundsatz* with the notion of intellectual intuition.

In its epistemological aspect, Schelling's approach denotes the constitution of the subject from a thoroughly dynamic angle,

96 I. Görland, *op. cit.*, pp. 187–96.

spotting the fact that knowledge and the categories are used (ontogenetically as well as phylogenetically) before they are identified by self-consciousness *qua* categories. Consciousness exists as intuitive before it becomes reflective and conceptualizing. "The very first act, from which the whole history of intelligence sets forth, is the act of self-consciousness insofar as it is not free but still unconscious" (STI, 450). Intuition precedes conceptual thought. However, this is only a half of Schelling's argument, for intuition is unconvincingly traversed by the philosopher into conceptual thought. This stance is not so clear in the *System of Transcendental Idealism*, but it becomes explicit a year after in the *Exposition of My System of Philosophy:*

> Intellectual intuition not only as preceding, but also as persisting, as unchangeable organ, is the condition of the scientific spirit overall, in all parts of knowledge (FD, 362).

The quandary at this point is obvious. Carried back into discursive thought, intuition undermines the purity of the *a priori*, the clarity of the concept and the precision of the conceptual argument. Schelling advances such a claim because his objective is not only finite knowledge, but rather infinite knowledge. By the same token, philosophy abandons the epistemologically confined role that Kant had ascribed to it (and Fichte defended) and becomes anew a metaphysical wonder into the secrets of creation. For Kant and Fichte, intuition was meant to articulate knowledge of the finite subject. Conversely, for Schelling it is meant to articulate knowledge of the absolute. Thereby Kant's and Fichte's philosophies are predominantly epistemological, whereas Schelling's restores metaphysics. This is why in Schelling's system intellectual intuition[97] will always play a cardinal role in perceiving the *ultimate* reality. Intuition becomes *the* primordial poetic faculty which, as self-intuition,

97 For a good discussion of the role of intuition in Schelling's philosophy of identity see M. Vater, "Intellectual Intuition in Schelling's Philosophy of Identity 1801–4," in C. Asmuth, A. Denker, and M. Vater, eds., *Hegel: Zwischen Fichte und Hegel = Between Fichte and Hegel*, (Amsterdam/Philadelphia: B.R. Gruner, 2000), pp. 213–34.

and as a new version of Spinoza's *natura naturans*,[98] produces from within itself. In this way, philosophy,

> because it is the unity of absolute cognition, can intuit its primordial image only in ideas, therefore intellectually, for the idea is the immediate modus of absolute cognition, but this latter is the idea of all ideas, the form of all forms … In general, any unity of thought and being is an intuition (FD, 347).

Intuition is a poetic faculty. The intuitive activity that produces the identity principle is aesthetic activity, and its tool is the philosophy of art. The latter thereby becomes "the only true and eternal organ and document of philosophy" (STI, 628) as the consciousness of the identity of the conscious and unconscious in the self, of the objective and subjective, of the real and ideal. Finally, once truth is understood in a way that cannot be subject to, or proven by, a thoroughly transparent explanation, the carrier of such activity cannot be anybody. Subject-object identity may be attained only by the work of art of a genius. It is curious (but indicative of the philosopher's imminent evolution) that in the 1800 *System*, the problem of art is addressed explicitly only in the last brief chapter,[99] in striking contrast to the extensive treatment of other issues that the work deals with. Whereas that chapter seems artificial to the structure of the 1800 *System*, it is important as a transitory mark toward the following step in the evolution of Schelling's ideas. Art comes to play a central role in Schelling's system and is specifically treated in a separate work, his 1803 *Philosophie der Kunst*.

To the extent to which Schelling's philosophical criticism aims at attaining unconditional certainty and absolute knowing, the

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98 W. Marx, *The Philosophy of F.W.J. Schelling. History, System, and Freedom*, trans. T. Nenon, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press), 1984, p. 39.

99 For a good discussion of these problems in Schelling's 1800 *System* see R. L. Veckley, "Realizing Nature in the Self: Schelling on Art and Intellectual Intuition in the *System of Transcendental Idealism*," in D.E. Klemm and G. Zöller, eds., *Figuring the Self: Subject, Absolute and Others in Classical German Philosophy* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1997), pp. 149–68.

philosopher relapses into pre-Kantian philosophy. In my analysis of Fichte's and Kant's doctrines, I argued that the metaphysical aspiration for unqualified certainty constituted an internal dividedness of their systems that rested on the fine line between epistemological and metaphysical cognition. This latter distinction is ultimately obliterated by Schelling. The Kantian notion of the unconditioned is now substituted by the absolute, and the latter is paralleled to the metaphysical absolute. However, once Schelling touches upon the metaphysical, he abandons the idea of consciousness as complete self-transparency, being aware of the unbridgeable chasm between logic and existence. For by existence, Schelling has in mind more than the unavoidable and empirically attained fact of finite human existence and its logic, which Kant and Fichte explored. The former Fichtean treats existence as a metaphysical category, as existence of the absolute.

To be accurate, all of the above in the *System of Transcendental Idealism* is rather a potency, and the work stands up to its name: it is a transcendental treatise. It is foretelling of Schelling's subsequent restoration of metaphysical philosophy, yet by itself does not amount to such a restoration. The philosopher clarifies that transcendental philosophy approaches self-consciousness as knowing and not as being (STI, 355). Thus it distances itself from both ontological idealism (which identifies knowledge as an extension of a higher subject) and dogmatism (which ascribes primary importance to being). To this extent, Schelling is concerned with the phenomenology of knowledge just as Fichte was before him. Schelling's striking advance over Fichte has to do with the thoroughly historical approach to knowledge. Such an approach permits Schelling to elaborate a radically new vision of the *a priori* and to shed new light on the Kantian riddle of the correspondence between ideas and intuitions.

How representations correspond to our intuitions and *vice versa* is the cardinal issue that Kant had struggled with and offered an agnostic answer to. Fichte effectively rejected the dilemma and saw the constitution of consciousness as arising entirely out of the spontaneity of the knowing subject. As I have argued on many occasions, Fichte's position only amplified the problem. Schelling, for whom the examination of the relation between concepts and intuitions is "the *highest* task of transcendental philosophy"

(STI, 348), proffers a different explanation. Amounting to a radical cut from Kant and Fichte, Schelling's stance is worth a more detailed analysis.

Completing the portrayal of the Third Epoch, in which intelligence has arisen out of nature and has become "reflective," Schelling writes that:

> the distinction between *a priori* and *a posteriori* . . . can hardly made be clear, indeed, in any other way but by exhibiting their origin in the intelligence itself. The specificity of Transcendental Idealism is that it can demonstrate the so-called *a priori* concepts in respect of their origin (STI, 527).

To this extent, Schelling follows Kant and even Fichte. The origin of knowledge is itself purely grasped. Knowledge is not empirical in the ordinary sense, but "purely" empirical, that is, distinct from immediate sensual experience. Such understanding is grounded on Kant's concept of "pure" intuition, that is, a meta-intuition, a concept about the possibility of intuition, not the sensual intuition itself. In other words, experience *for consciousness* can only be an *intellectual* experience, not a sensual one. Sensual experience is not and cannot be I unless it is realized as such, but once it is so realized, experience is no more sensual but pure. At the same time, knowledge is not only purely uttered, but also empirically grounded.

> All knowledge is originally through and through empirical, precisely because concept and object arise for us unseparated and simultaneously. For were we originally to have a knowledge *a priori*, there would first have to arise for us the concept of the object, and then the object itself in conformity thereto, which alone would permit a genuine *a priori* insight into the object. Conversely, all that knowledge is called empirical which arises from me wholly without my concurrence, as happens, for example, in a physical experiment whose results I cannot know beforehand (STI, 528–9).

When Schelling says "knowledge is originally empirical through and through, and also through and through *a priori*," he says so because the *a priori* – *a posteriori* distinction occurs and is solved

within the mind, and it is clear that it cannot be otherwise. However, Schelling's stance adjoins a discrete meaning to the role of the object in cognition. In his view, not only does the mind conceptualize, but it conceptualizes the manifold out of which the mind emerges. And the purity of the concept becomes possible *only* once the mind has been formatted. Schelling, therefore, addresses the empirical not only as transcendentally posited, but also as *a posteriori* grounded. Human intelligence does possess a distinct character and creativity, but intelligence in the philosopher's narration is merged with the object. If knowledge were to be merely *a posteriori*, it could not be *knowledge*. On the other hand, if knowledge were to be absolutely *a priori*, it would be impossible to explain the relation to the object.

In sum, Schelling achieves a succinct portrayal of the twofold nature of cognition. Knowledge arises out of the empirical manifold but once conceptualized and categorized, it is simultaneously autonomized: transcending the limitedness of the manifold, knowledge preconditions the reach toward the latter. And if natural history is a part of the coming-to-be of intelligence, then the empirical acquires an entirely different meaning, despite Schelling's assurance that he is deducing "pure" experience. Experience *de facto* becomes a necessary and extensive first step toward knowledge in general, although knowledge necessarily realizes that *post factum*. Thus,

> insofar, that is, as the self produces everything from itself, to that extent everything. … is *a priori* … But insofar as we are not aware of this producing, to that extent there is nothing *a priori* in us, and everything, in fact, is *a posteriori* (STI, 528–9).

Schelling's esteem toward Spinoza is understandable. Like Fichte, Schelling is closer to idealism than to realism (dogmatism). He concedes the consecutiveness of Spinozism and specifies that Spinoza's doctrine can only hold as science of nature. However, having identified the extent and the limitations of Spinoza, just like Fichte did, Schelling abstains from Fichte's furious renunciations. For nature (and Spinozism therewith) is exactly what Schelling attempts to incorporate into his doctrine. Organic nature formats an integral component of Schelling's version of transcendental

philosophy, indeed in a necessary way. For it is already in the *1800 System* when Schelling writes: "One may say that organic nature furnishes the most obvious proof of transcendental idealism, for every plant is a symbol of the intelligence" (STI, 490).

Intelligence, in other words, finds its truth not within itself (as in Fichte), but through its otherness, reality, and nature. From there, Schelling explicitly articulates the idea of nature as a whole, and the adequacy of natural philosophy: "a simultaneous existence of all substances transforms them into one, comprehended only in eternal reciprocity with itself; this is absolute organization" (STI, 495). The argument could not be made clearer. Schelling offers an explicit sign of the subsequent development of his ideas.

The outcome of Schelling's transcendental approach is twofold. On the one hand, the unequivocally essential role of the manifold in cognition (even as transcendentally portrayed) drives Schelling away from Fichte. On the other hand, the ultimate spiritualism that the philosopher wants to pursue drives him toward the restoration of pre-Kantian metaphysics. These two sides in Schelling's exposition (and language) are vital for his intellectual evolution. He strives to ground knowledge in the object, or portray knowledge as coming out of the object, so to overcome the shortcomings of the *Wissenschaftslehre*. Therefore, Schelling traces the evolution of intelligence "not in general but in actual fact" and posits intelligence *in nature*. Yet, Schelling posits *intelligence* in nature. Although being gains priority in historical time, it does not *explain* mind. The opposite is required: mind *must* be explained on its own grounds. Absolutely convinced of that, Schelling even claims that a consecutive materialism would have to turn into transcendental idealism because:

> to explain thinking as a material phenomenon is possible only by turning matter itself into a phantom, the mere modification of an intelligence, whose common functions are thought and matter. Materialism itself thereby reverts to an intelligence as that which is primary (STI, 406).

The above passage shows both the philosopher's idealistic striving as well as the potential for the shift toward natural philosophy and Spinozism. However, even when this happens, just a year later,

Schelling does not become an uncritical Spinozist.[100] Restricting the spiritual in its natural origin would have been catastrophic. Schelling's alarm for such perspective had been expressed even earlier, and in that he was following Fichte. In the *Philosophical Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism* (1795), Schelling had lucidly expressed the concern about the shortcomings of the *Critique of Pure Reason.* Although that work had demonstrated the inevitability of the spiritual principle and its primacy,

> it has proved that that controversy [between dogmatism and criticism] cannot be *closed* in theoretical philosophy; it has not refuted dogmatism, whose very claim it has in fact withdrawn from the jurisdiction of theoretical reason; and this much the *Critique of Pure Reason* has in common not only with the complete system of criticism, but even with a consistent dogmatism (PB, 299).

The above concern delineates the problems of post-Kantian transcendental philosophy, namely, the unification of the theoretical with the practical, the grounding of morality, and the fight against dogmatism. The latter has only negative connotations, such as immorality, lack of spirituality, lack of ideals. The role of Christianity is crucial here.[101] Schelling sees the problem of the renunciation of dogmatism as gnoseological and metaphysical at once. He is alarmed that from the *Critique of Pure Reason* one may equally deduce both dogmatism (materialism) and idealism. In order to avoid this danger, he seeks to ground knowledge on a single and also *spiritual* principle that is, nevertheless, different than Fichte's. While Fichte's corresponding principle pertained to the human

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100 See also the discussion in M. Walther, *Spinoza und der Deutsche Idealismus,* pp. 111–41.

101 For a rare and informed discussion of the religious influences on Schelling, see T. O'Meara, *Romantic Idealism and Roman Catholicism: Schelling and the Theologians* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1982). Although that book is devoted primarily to the role of Catholics and the Romantics in Schelling's career rather than to Catholicism and Romanticism as doctrines in Schelling's philosophy, it is still an important reminder of the prevalent intellectual atmosphere of the early 19th century.

subject (thus, early Fichte had even been accused of atheism), Schelling's principle brings out the opposite, the infinite subject. Schelling has a twofold task. On the one hand he must demonstrate the intimate unity between the spiritual principle and nature, and on the other hand, he must interpret the object from the standpoint of idealism. The first leads him to the restoration of natural philosophy. The second leads him to ontological idealism and pursuit of the secret of creation. Each of these aspects amounts to the restoration of pre-Kantian metaphysics.

D. *The Resurrection of Metaphysics and the Problem of Dialectic*

The candid resurrection of natural philosophy and metaphysics by Schelling takes place after the *System of Transcendental Idealism.* Examined retrospectively, such a step is not surprising, but an inevitable development of the potencies that were lurking in the young philosopher's thought from the beginning. He had started off by seeking an ultimate principle that would ground absolute knowing or make knowledge deducible to an absolute end, and he located such ground in the Fichtean subject-object identity. At the same time, Schelling was unsatisfied with the subject-oriented explanation that was proposed by Fichte, for it bracketed out the object, nature. Schelling understood that the achievement of identity cannot occur simply on the plane of conscious reflections, either as thought or action. The mediation must be of an ontological, not solely reflective sort, and must actualize harmony between nature and the human spirit. Being under the influence of the Romantics, Jacobi, and Spinoza,[102] Schelling sought an *objective* absolute ground of the identity and moved thus beyond Fichte. Whereas Fichte had expressed the unity of the subject and

102 For a discussion of Schelling that emphasizes on this issue, see esp. D. Snow, *Schelling and the End of Idealism* (New York: SUNY Press, 1996), esp. chapters 1 and 2. A fragment of early Schelling's commentary of Plato's *Timaeus* that was recently discovered suggests that Plato's influence is crucial in the formation of Schelling's metaphysics. In detail, see M. Baum, "The Beginnings of Schelling's Philosophy of Nature," in S. Sedgwick., ed., *The Reception of Kant's Critical Philosophy,* pp. 111–215.

object as a *subjective* unity, thus emphasizing the epistemological nature of his enterprise, Schelling, via the intuition of *outer* nature, sought to express the unity of I as *objective* subject-object unity.

Up to the completion of the *System of Transcendental Idealism*, the thinker strives to combine both sides of the problematic and alleges that his contribution is an elaboration of Fichte's paradigm. Schelling's transcendentalism is indeed relative to Fichte's, but only to some extent. Having been carried through the transitional 1800 *System*, Schelling's twofoldness finds resolution in the 1801 *Darstellung meines Systems der Philosophie* and the works that immediately follow. The philosopher finally comes to concede his diversion from Fichte's stance:

> Fichte … could think of idealism in a fully subjective sense, whereas I, to the contrary, [think of idealism] in objective sense. Fichte could maintain idealism from the standpoint of reflection, whereas I, to the contrary, presented it from the standpoint of production (DMS, 109).

To be fair, Fichte also posited the activity of consciousness, yet he had left out the real dimension of the sought activity, the external world. Schelling, therefore, appears entitled to talk about "production" and includes nature as well as history therein. At the same time, when stressing the active nature of consciousness, Schelling already has in mind not human but divine intelligence.

The permanent emphasis on "absolute intelligence" was evident all the way through Schelling's early, so-called Fichtean, writings. The stress of the objective aspect of the subject-object unity does not come to an end with nature; it ends with the absolute subject which literally creates both the finite subject and object, the latter as *real* object, real nature. The absolute subject is openly paralleled with the divine, but this should not come as a surprise. Schelling had related the I to God already in his early attempts: "In the theoretical sense God is I = not-I. In the practical sense, He is *absolute* I" (IP, 201). The notion of the self, which in Fichte's explorations was associated with the human subject, becomes for Schelling the absolute divine subject, the Platonic *δημιουργός*.

At the same time, Schelling's advance consists in that the absolute is not merely transcendent, but incorporates nature into itself. In this way, Spinozism comes to play a major role in his Identity

Philosophy. Once again, there is no surprise in that. Not without Spinozist influence, the young Schelling had already written in *The Unconditional in Human Knowledge:* "If *substance* is the same as the unconditional, *then the I is the only substance*" (IP, 192). In that work, Fichte's ambiguous follower had also conceded: "In spite of all its errors, Spinoza's system seems to me more worthy of high esteem because of its bold consequences ... [it is] the system of a great thinker whose speculations take great flights" (IP, 151–2). Schelling's aspiration was to "write a counterpart to Spinoza's *Ethics*"(IP, 160). Further on, in the *System of Transcendental Idealism*, Spinoza was not overthrown but incorporated in Schelling's version of transcendental philosophy. One might say that the objective to write a counterpart to *Ethics* is finally accomplished in the *Darstellung* and the works that follow. Schelling acknowledges his indebtedness to Spinoza when he comments on natural philosophy:

> In its highest and most complete form (I have in mind Spinozism) it has been in all publicly known views up to today miscomprehended (*verkannt*) and misunderstood (DMS, 110).

According to Schelling's newly elaborated doctrine, in the philosophy of identity Fichte stands as the counterpart of Spinoza and transcendentalism as the counterpart of naturalism. Schelling seeks to connect both stances in a shift which is announced as "absolute unification," and is candidly metaphysical. Not only does he stress that "the universe is an absolute totality," but he also specifies in a pantheistic way: "The absolute identity is not the source of the universe, but it is the universe itself" (DMS, 129). Moreover, the sought identity is now "essentially the same in every part of the universe" (DMS, 130). Hence, "Reason is the absolute reason, or reason insofar as it is thought as total indifference between subjective and objective ... absolutely one and equal to itself ... outside reason there is nothing, and in it is everything" (FD, 415, 116); "the absolute identity can never be sublated" (DMS, 119); and, within it, "*no* quantitative difference can be thought" (DMS, 125).

In the philosophy of identity, Spinoza, who had not separated the empirical from pure consciousness, but "much more

posited them as absolutely inseparable and united in absolute consciousness" (FD, 354) is, strikingly, esteemed more than Fichte. Spinoza is respected for his version of monism which, in Schelling's view, puts forth the identity of being and thought in a more consecutive way than Fichte's doctrine. Spinoza's realism departs from absolute being in order to be elevated to absolute knowledge, whereas Fichte's idealism departs from absolute knowledge but proves "incapable to find confirmation through being" (DWV, 54). Schelling finds such confirmation in an unreserved pantheism that he juxtaposes to Fichte's as well as to his own previous doctrine:

> The realm of nature is this conceptually eternal mutual reflection (*ewiges in-einander-Scheinen*) of essence and form or the eternal birth of God in things and equally the reverse elevation of these things in God, so that, when considered in its essence, nature is only the complete existence of God (*das volle Göttliche Dasein*) or God considered in the actuality of his life and in its self-revelation (DWV, 59).

What, then, is the limitation of Spinoza? By retaining the spiritual principle in nature, Spinozism fails to apprehend and properly exhibit the free and creative aspect of spirit, both finite and infinite. As Schelling will put it in his essay *On Human Freedom,* "Spinozism more closely resembles a work of art which has been sketched only in its most general outlines and in which if it were endowed with a soul, one would still notice how many features were lacking or incomplete" (PU, 350).

For a moment, being submerged in the elaboration of his own pantheistic philosophy in the early 1800s, Schelling seems to have fallen himself into such quandary of neglecting self-determination. The 1809 *Freedom Essay* comes to restore the proper emphasis. As a matter of fact, it is since his very first philosophical review that Schelling had endorsed Kant's and Fichte's notion of transcendental freedom: "But what alone exceeds our knowledge is the ability of *transcendental freedom*, or of *Willing* in us. Because, as the Boundary of all our knowledge and action, it is necessarily also the only incomprehensible, insoluble, by its nature most groundless, most improvable, but precisely therefore

the most immediate and evident in our knowledge."[103] It is the urge for substantiation of freedom that underlies Schelling's project and is usually interpreted as signifying the completion of idealism.[104] Both in the *Freedom Essay* as well as in the *Ages of the World*, Schelling underscores the absoluteness and divinity of freedom: "Freedom appears everywhere conquering necessity" (W, 303). In Heidegger's emphatic words, freedom in Schelling is "not the property of man, but the other way around: man is at best property of freedom."[105]

But Schelling does not limit his discussion to the autonomy of the human agency; rather, he posits the primordial divine autonomy as the guarantor of human freedom. As W. Marx sharply puts it, "In view of Spinoza's system, Schelling recognized quite early that the proof of freedom's predominance in both realms, in nature and in spirit, can be convincing only if the appearances of finite freedom are founded in divine freedom. Therefore, Spinoza's *causa sui*, the freedom of the absolute as absolute

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103 "Was aber allein alles unser Erkennen übersteigt, ist das Vermögen der *transzendentalen Freiheit,* oder des *Wollens* in uns. Denn als die *Grenze* alles unseres Wissens und Thuns ist es notwendig auch das einzige *Unbegreifliche, Unauflösleiche* – seiner Natur nach *Grundloseste,* Unbeweisbarste, eben deswegen aber das Unmittelbarste und evidenteste in unserem Wissen." [From Schelling's "Allgemeine Uebersicht der neuesten philosophischen Literatur," quoted from A. Schurr, *Philosophie als System bei Fichte, Schelling und Hegel.* (Stuttgart: Frommann Verlag, 1974), p. 113].

104 Cf. E. Cattin, *Transformations de la métaphysique. Commentaires sur la philosophie transcendantale de Schelling* (Paris: Vrin, 2001). In a Heideggerian tone, Cattin argues that "idealism is not 'a philosophy of freedom' but *the philosophy of freedom itself*" (p. 156). Cf. M. Heidegger, *Schelling's Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom,* trans. J. Stambaugh (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1985), p. 92. In that sense, Schelling, accomplishes the project of *idealism.* Dale Snow sees a rather sad end of idealism in Schelling's substantiation of the autonomy of *evil* that complements freedom in the *Freedom Essay.* (See D. Snow, *Schelling and the End of Idealism,* Ch. 7, esp. pp. 174ff.)

105 M. Heidegger, *Schelling's Treatise,* p. 9.

'groundlessness,' must previously have been conceived of as such if freedom within the finite realm is to be secured."[106]

In this way, Schelling's philosophy develops into a doctrine that is as much Spinozistic as it is spiritualistic and Neoplatonic.[107] The sought unity of consciousness with its object, of the spiritual with the material, of reason with nature, is not merely attained but also stretched to its downward (natural) and upward (spiritual) limits, and advanced as a metaphysical doctrine. In Schelling, reason's relation to nature is more reminiscent of Plotinus' *απόρροια*, the emanation of absolute reason rather than the activity of Kant's and early Fichte's finite transcendental subject. In Schelling's restoration of metaphysics, the Cartesian–Kantian–Fichtean finite subject is conspicuously done away with.

> The I think, I am, is since Descartes the ground error of all cognition; thought is not my thought, and being is not my being, for all is only in God or in the all (AEN, 148).

Human reason is supplemented by the divine *Λόγος*, finite reason becomes infinite reason, and the human is related to the godly. Such is the metaphysical position that the philosopher establishes in the first decade of the 1800s. From then on, it will be maintained throughout Schelling's life. (His later versions of philosophy of mythology and philosophy of revelation do not comprise a substantial cut from, but rather a procedural difference within, his metaphysical doctrine.)

Schelling propels the discussion of the subject-object identity to its logical end. In the development from Fichte's subjective identity of finite reason to Schelling's objective identity of infinite

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106 W. Marx, *The Philosophy of F.W.J. Schelling.*, p. 60 and 60ff. Heidegger sees it somewhat differently: "Schelling had pointed out a new solution to the whole question by showing that man's most lively feeling of freedom placed him not outside God and against God, but as belonging to the 'life of God.' Freedom demands immanence in God, pantheism." (M. Heidegger, *Schelling's Treatise*, p. 85)

107 As X. Tilliette puts it, Schelling represents a "platonic profession of 'Spinozism' " (X. Tilliette, *op. cit.*, p. 74).

reason, the Kantian thing-in-itself is unequivocally abandoned. While the thing-in-itself was proposed by Kant as a means for ultimate *caution*, the post-Kantians treated it as just a medium to obtain ultimate *certainty*. The nullity of the thing-in-itself in the hands of Fichte and Schelling leads to a reproduction of the problems of metaphysics all over again.

Fichte's interpretation had reduced the thing-in-itself to a projection of the I. From being the distinction that delineated the horizon of human cognition, the thing-in-itself was *de facto* transferred to a mere gnoseological instrument without real importance. Endorsing Fichte's antiskeptical striving, Schelling simultaneously discerned the paradoxical situation in which the idea of the thing-in-itself leads from the standpoint of absolute cognition: The thing-in-itself "is something for the I, hence in the I, and nevertheless, it must be *not* in the I, but *outside* the I" (FD, 356 – the exact same criticism will be soon repeated by Hegel in the *Phenomenology*). Schelling initially advanced a transcendental analysis of nature and showed how intelligence arises therein. However, nature alone is not capable of completing Schelling's project. Here is how in brief and concise words the transformation of Kantian philosophy is expressed. Schelling's view is:

> that we correctly intuit the things-in-themselves, even that these are the only appearances, but in no way that this, which is not in itself, is as such thought of or imagined. Precisely on this ground, this view rejects all *a priori* knowledge absolutely and all the way through; what was made known by Kant and Fichte, namely, the alleged cognition through concepts of the understanding, is [for this view] nothing necessary but an entirely acceptable and conversely applicable (*wieder abzulegende*) way of thinking and considering things (*Denk=und Betrachtungsweise*) that has its absolute ground not simply in the subject, but is a product of the true, i.e. non-appearing, thought. But rational cognition is also *not a priori;* because for it there exists nothing to which it could be a precedent (Prius). The consequent (Posterius) should be the actuality; only the eternal, the cognition of which is reason, is the full and complete actual, so that there is no other actual outside it. Precisely therefore, the relation of this view to experience as [source of] cognition cannot be one of opposition, but only that of a primordial, inner unity (DWV, 63–4).

Schelling considers *a priori* cognition as grounded on *a posteriori*, and even more so, as just a "way of seeing things." His stance takes immanence much more acutely than Kant and especially Fichte. Schelling does so without becoming reductionist, for he concedes the specificity of conceptual cognition, its creativity, and totalizing nature. On the one hand, the unity of cognition with its material object is established, and the task is set to examine cognition as arising from the object which cognition reproduces in thought. Therefore, one half of the enterprise, as the philosopher makes it clear, is to "scientifically demonstrate the transition from the field of nature to that of spiritual world" (UZ, 5). On the other hand, for Schelling, *a priori* cognition is not grounded in the human subject alone. This clearly cannot be the case, once the goal of philosophy becomes the deciphering of the divine mind. In effect, Schelling decodes the riddle of the *a priori*, yet he does so in a capsized way through the appeal to the absolute as the ground of cognition. He clarifies that he is not conducting a merely natural scientific inquiry but aims at the opposite, the explanation of how the *divine* comes to be from nature, the latter viewed as mirroring the absolute. Therefore, the revelation of the inwardness of nature stands up to its name. It is indeed a revelation, but a revelation of God in nature.

Thus, in Schelling, philosophy entirely abandons the Kantian humility. It becomes a means of articulating absolute cognition and the absolute itself. "The absolute, or knowledge of it, is the highest goal of philosophy" (FD, 349), and Schelling now defines philosophy as "the science of the absolute" (FD, 351). On this issue, too, Schelling answers to an earlier aspiration. For already in the *Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism,* he had written the following:

> True enough, criticism, can prove the necessity of synthetic propositions in the realm of experience. But of what avail is that in answering our question? I ask again, why is there a realm of experience at all? (PB, 310)

Resurrecting the pre-Kantian view of philosophy, Schelling is looking for the ultimate and unconditional truth, one that is beyond history and time, beyond the physical, i.e., the meta-physical. Schelling restores metaphysics in its entirety, from Aristotle's *πρώτη φιλοσοφία (philosophia prima)*, which is supposed to

inquire *τό τί ἦν εἶναι*, to Voltaire's and, more recently, Heidegger's question: "Why is there being at all and there is not nothing?" To be exact, the mature Schelling asks the same question himself: "*Warum ist nicht nichts, warum ist, warum ist überhaupt etwas?*" (AEN, 174) This is exactly the issue which Kant resolutely refused to answer. Mature Schelling, to the contrary, charges that Kant's philosophy "was *hostile* towards the *positive*" (GNP, 75, HMP,[108] 95), for Kant had "directed philosophy toward the subjective" (GNP, 89; HMP, 106). It is this subjective side that Fichte elaborated, but this is the wrong way to advance over Kant. Therefore, Schelling argues, "there was more objectivity in Kant's critique than in Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*" (GNP, 91; HMP, 107), and as such Fichte's criticism "cannot be applied to Spinozism" (GNP, 86; HMP, 103). Schelling comes to restore the equilibrium and, as it has already been argued, does so in a capsized way. For not only does he reestablish the relationship between subject and object, spirit and nature, *a priori* and *a posteriori*, but also the relationship between philosophy and metaphysics, man and God.

Let us now turn to the other main problem of the present section, the role of dialectic in Schelling's argument. From a procedural standpoint, Schelling's treatment of the dialectic does not comprise any radical cut, especially in relation to Fichte, but it does possess a deep-seated advantage in relation to both Kant and Fichte. Kant had maintained that dialectic is not inherent in reason. (Although unavoidable, the dialectic of reason is illusory.) Fichte, to the contrary, having derived knowledge from a single principle, saw dialectic as intrinsic to reason. The rupture was clear, but the payoff was dramatic. Fichte only magnified the Kantian problem of the relationship between thoughts and intuitions. Schelling inherits the dialectical discourse and, by positing the unity of intelligence and nature, he expands the reach of dialectic into the real object. In this sense he attains a significant vantage point, which cannot be diminished by the fact that along the way he revives metaphysics.

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108 F. Schelling, *On the History of Modern Philosophy,* trans. A. Bowie (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994). Hereafter quoted in the text as HMP followed by page number.

In the philosophy of identity, the concept of identity designates the point where subjective and objective merge, where "all cows are black," as Hegel put it in his famous sarcasm in the *Phenomenology*. The divine is one and the same, unchangeable. At the same time, the pantheistic philosophy of identity contains all the seeds of Schelling's further development. For not only do the opposites *merge* in the absolute, but it is *the opposites* that merge. The twofoldness of Schelling's position has attracted different interpretations. Emphasizing this aspect and defending Schelling against Hegel's criticism, M. Frank[109] distinguishes between grounding absolute being (what is indeed Schelling's intention) and absolute identity (what Hegel unjustifiably ascribes to Schelling). An opposite emphasis on the same question is put by A. Bowie. According to Bowie, even though Schelling does move away from the early version of identity philosophy, some of his arguments remain valid for him until the very end.[110] Either way, the identity as such is never entirely abandoned by Schelling. But its articulation changes considerably in the philosopher's later works.

While in the period between 1801–9 Schelling's emphasis of the self-identical nature of the absolute overshadows its contradictory constitution, the problem of contradiction reemerges the philosopher's so-called "middle period," particularly in the *Ages of the World*, and the essay *On Human Freedom*. In those essays, Schelling changes the accents. One and the same absolute contains in itself the opposites, and, in this respect, the continuity with the identity philosophy is lucid. At the same time, the opposites are no more contained in the calm and peaceful scenery that the *Identitätsphilosophie* had portrayed, but, according to Schelling's expression, in a dramatic setting of the Heraclitean *ακάματον πύρ*. The absolute is portrayed as an eternal *contrast* of different potencies, an eternal antithesis in which the absolute is tormented, and is set in an "involuntary movement," a wheel of birth ("*τροχός της γεννήσεως*"),

109 See M. Frank, *Der unendliche Mangel am Sein: Schellings Hegelkritik und die Anfänge der Marxschen Dialektik,* 2.Aufi. (München: WilhelmFink Verkag, 1992), esp. pp. 197ff.

110 A. Bowie, *Schelling and Modern European Philosophy* (New York and London: Routledge, 1993), pp. 60, 91–2.

the scientific concept of which is "incessantly returning into itself and beginning again" (W, 230). In the *Freedom Essay*, Schelling writes:

> In the cycle whence all things come, it is no contradiction to say that that which gives birth to the one is, in its turn, produced by it. There is no first and no last, since everything mutually implies everything else, nothing being the 'other' and yet no being being without the other (PU, 358)

Schelling's interests during his middle period are unequivocally metaphysical, and at the same time, he exhibits an impressive dialectic that is deliberate, thorough, and well thought through. Its presence and necessity is viewed as a means to move philosophy to actual knowledge (W, 203). Its applicability is universal: "All science must pass through dialectic" (W, 207). Schelling reiterates the need for a changing, dynamic portrayal of the truth, and it is on this aspect that scientific philosophical inquiry must focus.

> What is essential in science is movement. Deprived of this vital principle, its assertions die like fruit taken from the living tree. Propositions that are unconditioned, that is, valid once and for all, are antagonistic to the nature of true science, which consists in progress (W, 208).

Once antagonism and movement are addressed, the problem of contradiction is naturally brought up. In Schelling's discussion in the *Weltalter*, such is the main ingredient of being, both finite and infinite: "All life must pass through the fire of contradiction. Contradiction is life's mainspring and core" (W, 321). In a striking blend of dialectical persistence, awareness of the importance of contradiction, and metaphysical-ontological objectives, Schelling claims: "The contradiction which we have conceived … is the fountainhead of eternal life; the construction of this contradiction is the highest task of science" (W, 321).

Schelling thus points to the inadequate explanatory potential of the law of identity by separating the formal logical from the cognitive and the copula from existence. He who claims that "it is a contradiction that *one and the same* thing is both this and its exact

opposite" (W, 213) misunderstands the principle of identity, for identity does not preclude but presupposes difference and contradiction. Yet the involvement of contradiction is concrete and in need of specification of its meaning. To say that something is, is not the same as saying *what* it is. Hence, the copula as ontologically identifying the existing subject is not to be mistaken with its use for relating that subject with its predicates. Thus, Schelling writes, "the principle of contradiction, correctly understood, really only says this much, that one and the same *as such* cannot be something and its opposite – which, however, does not preclude what is A from being able to be something else, not A" (W, 214). Identity can exist only as unity of identity and difference, and this is something that cannot be apprehended by formal thinking. Schelling addresses quite ironically those who prefer to think formally at the expense of seeking the truth:

> Whoever wants to think according to the (misunderstood) basic principle of contradiction, may be clever enough, like the sophists, to dispute for and against everything; but to find the truth, which does not lie in excessive extremes, he is totally unskilled (W, 286).

That general (formal) logic is not the logic of truth is a claim that was advanced before Schelling. In German idealism in particular, such claim had been advanced by Kant in his distinction between general and transcendental logic, and Kant had complained that formal logic from *canon* is often misused as an *organon* of thought. The same dissatisfaction with formal logic was reproduced by Fichte and now by Schelling.

At the same time, Schelling's position is characterized by ambiguity and reluctance. To effectively sublate the law of identity means to demonstrate that the object is not identical to itself in one and the same relationship and at one and the same time. Otherwise, the difference between essential contradiction and contradictory predication vanishes. Predication is obviously an infinite regress. In order to grasp the truth, thought has to address its object as *simultaneously* identical and different. In this context, contradiction arises as the very core of being and as a central cognitive issue. Schelling, however, seeks to maintain that eventually identity prevails, and this is an assertion that strikingly contrasts

his actual narrative. For in his narrative, all unity is torn apart by contradictions; every resolved contradiction is at the same time the creation of a new one, and the absolute is *in one and the same relationship* identical and different.

Schelling's twofold position is that, on the one hand, "nothing can tolerate contradiction, nothing which finds itself in contradiction will rest until the unity which reconciles or overcomes it has been found (W, 219). . . . Everything longs for constant being; nothing wants contradiction," and on the other hand, that it "cannot by itself come out of contradiction, for it is its nature to be in contradiction" (W, 246). Not by accident, Schelling (as well as Fichte before him), treats contradiction *de facto*, yet does address it as a logical problem. In this respect, he is inconsistent in his analysis, matching the unavoidability of contradiction with a negative attitude toward it.

In a crucial move in the *Weltalter*, Schelling avoids direct confrontation with the concept of contradiction by elevating the problem above and beyond time. He writes that the contradictory potencies are not at the same time, but they are "at once, in different times" in the absolute's "eternal past" (W, 190). Yet the absolute itself comprises a "primordial indivisible essence that never comes to be but remains in a state of eternal desire . . . an incessant seeking, an eternal, never quieted passion" (W, 232). Such twofoldness can be explicated as an allusion to the circular character of dialectic. In this sense, Schelling's stance is comparable to Fichte's. Unlike Fichte, however, Schelling is now in need of accounting for the *objectivity* of dialectic, its relevance to real time and real objects; the objectivity which the philosopher himself brings forth and underscores. It is at this point where Shelling seems to retreat from dialectic.

According to V.V. Lasarev, Schelling in the *Weltalter* posits an "absolute opposition between essence and existence" reminiscent of the Kantian dialectic as the logic of illusion.[111] The difference between essence and existence as metaphysical categories is a known problem in Schelling's philosophy. With respect to dialectic,

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111 V.V. Lazarev, *Filosofia Rann'evo y Posdn'evo Schellinga* [*The Philosophy of Early and Mature Schelling*] (Moscow: Nauka, 1990), pp. 137ff.

however, the issue is more complex. An opposition between essence and existence might be conceivable with regard to the absolute, for the absolute in its self-identical being (as essence) would not be the same as the absolute in its contradictory being (as existence). However, by this mere argument, the essence *must be* contradictory, for essence cannot lie beyond existence. Therefore, the absolute must be *essentially* contradictory. Yet Schelling is reluctant to make such claim. Instead, he introduces a number of fine distinctions between God and Godhead (the latter representing the transcendent and non-transparent part of the absolute that Schelling always seeks to portray as being self-identical) and finds it possible to maintain that identity is prevalent. "There is no becoming in pure godhead. The latter remains what it is in itself" (W, 298).

The philosopher's metaphysical concerns are of crucial importance for my criticism. With regard to the divine, he finds it necessary to stress its unconditional nature and to portray it in an unqualified way. An expansion of the contradiction would *de facto* imply a thorough *relativization* of the absolute. Undertaken by Hegel, such step meets Schelling's fierce condemnation. Thus, Schelling does not elaborate on the issue of contradiction *qua* logical contradiction, and he does not tackle contradiction as an essential aspect of rationality. Instead, he envisages a final stage in which identity prevails. Such an approach can explain, and simultaneously be explained, by the philosopher's unwillingness to deliberately set the task of reconsidering traditional logic. Once again, in contrast to that unwillingness, Schelling's narrative leads beyond traditional (formal) logic, for the philosopher portrays a dynamic picture that is full of contradiction. Schelling thus shows a bizarre infidelity to his own course of action by simultaneously relying on two separate logics.

Still, Schelling's position has a number of advantages. Not only does he accomplish the traversal of the dialectic of reason into the categories of the understanding, thus internally uniting the functions of both faculties, but he also continues where Fichte had left off, reversing the *a priori – a posteriori* dilemma by *explaining* the source of cognition in nature and history. In this way, dialectic is traversed into the realm of the object, and nature *must* reproduce the contradiction. In Schelling's own words, "that

the same creative powers lie in the essence of the spiritual world which lie in nature hardly requires any proof" (W, 286). And once the tormenting of the absolute in the *Weltalter* is broken and nature is created, nature replicates the contradictory makeup of the divine. For the philosopher, such a claim is based on and oriented toward the metaphysical, the cognition of the absolute. Compared to the post-Kantian discourse, Schelling's position is twofold. First, he accomplishes the sought unity between understanding and reason (with the latter spreading in the realm of the former) and at once demonstrates the unity between rational and empirical cognition. In that sense, Schelling is a post-Kantian. Second, reason brings to the process not only its dialectic but also its metaphysical hunt, that is, a pre-Kantian endeavor. For Schelling, the rational view on the object is equal to the object's metaphysical description and is accompanied by an unwarranted obliteration of the thing-in-itself and an alleged revelation of the ultimate secrets of creation.

The above having been said, Schelling's advance is unquestionable. In throwing the absolute into nature, he reinvents the object as such. This stance has caused the most varied and versatile reactions. Quite often Schelling is interpreted as a source of Marxism. Manfred Frank, for instance, has advanced an especially detailed account of this issue.[112] Arguing for the ontological proximity between Schelling's and Marx's criticism of Hegel, Frank maintains that that Feuerbach[113] raises against Hegel the essential arguments of Schelling and, therefore, Marx's charges against Hegelian idealism reproduce not only Feuerbach's but also Schelling's criticism. Significant proximity to Marxism (especially to F. Engels) can also be shown in Schelling's insights into the

112 M. Frank, *Der unendliche Mangel am Sein*. Habermas also argues that Marx's reception of Hegel was "eine durch Schelling vorbereitete." See J. Habermas, *Theorie und Praxis* (Neuwied und Berlin: Luchterhand, 3.Aufl., 1969), p. 156. Alan White suggests that it is the failure of Schelling's 1841–2 Berlin Lectures that convinced Marx to abandon metaphysics (A. White, *Schelling: an Introduction to the System of Freedom,* pp. 2–3, 188–91).

113 M. Frank, *Der unendliche Mangel am Sein,* pp. 38, 101, esp., 255–92, etc.

dialectic of nature. At the same time, the substantial differences between Schelling and Marx(ism) should not be diminished. First, it must be emphasized that Marx does not simply reverse Hegel but also does away with ontological/metaphysical claims and, thus, (unlike Schelling) thoroughly reduces the ontological/metaphysical discourse to the logical and historical. For instance, Schelling's "theory of time"[114] is of little interest for Marx(ism), even if it, indeed, formats the grounds of Marxist philosophy as unfolding in real time. Second, Marx does not advance any epistemologically innovative claims beyond the endorsement of Hegel's dialectic, and, in this sense, he stands substantially closer to Hegel than to Schelling.

The most frequent charge against Schelling is probably that he relapses into pre-dialectical philosophy and pre-critical metaphysics.[115] Although it is rightfully noted that Schelling's natural philosophy represents a general ontology of pre-Kantian type, it is not accurate to say that Schelling relapses into pre-dialectical philosophy. The important moment in Schelling's shift is that the absolute is not simply thrown in nature, but it is thrown in a fundamentally

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114 *Ibid.*, pp. 322ff.

115 "Schelling rekurriert auf eine von den göttlichen Wirklichkeit unabhängige, aber in deren Wesen begründete Möglichkeit aller Dinge. … Er geht auf die Ebene der vorkritischen Metaphysik zurück … Einerseits läßt sich das theoretische Bedürfnis nach der Erkennbarkeit eines durchgängigen Zusammenhangs des Seienden in ganzen nur auf der Grundlage des absoluten Idealismus; Andererseits läßt sich das praktische Bedürfnis nach dem geschichtlichen Begriff einer unversöhnten Welt nur unter Suspendierung dieser Grundlage befriedigen. Schelling möchte jedoch das eine haben, ohne das andere lassen zu können; er muß sich die Kompatibilität beider Philosophien gleichsam erschleichen. Schelling will auf der festgehaltenen Basis des Idealismus über diesen hinaus; er Fällt gerade deshalb hinter ihn in vordialektische Philosophie zurück." J. Habermas, *Theorie und Praxis*, p. 145. Habermas' essay "*Dialektischer Idealismus im Übergang – Geschichtsphilosophische Folgerungen aus Schellings Idee einer Contraction Gottes*" was not included in the English translation of *Theory and Praxis*. See also his Ph.D. Dissertation *Das Absolute und die Geschichte. Von der Zweispältigkeit in Schellings Denken* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1954).

innovative manner, namely, in a *rational* (as unconscious *intelligence*) and *dialectical* way. I have argued that Schelling's dialectic is procedurally *incomplete*, but it is by definition *universal*, expanding from the subject to the object. Thus, his narrative acquires the radically new contour that will be later elaborated by Hegel. It is not by accident that Schelling's commentators tend to see in his doctrine a universal ground on which the entire Hegelian philosophy could be fit.[116] As Hegel puts it, in Schelling "there is already the idea that nature is an equally rational system (*System der Vernünftigen*) as knowledge."[117] Thus, unless reason is seen as possessing an independent of the natural world dialectic (but even in this case, the dialectic would be similar to the Kantian, and not pre-Kantian), it is obvious that Schelling is a not pre-dialectical philosopher.

In my view, the main difficulty with Schelling is not that he restored metaphysics. Such a quandary is counterbalanced by his dialectical unification of the *a priori* with the *a posteriori*. Natural Philosophy is always doomed to failure, but, as Bowie insightfully asks "Does this then mean that the very attempt at a *Naturphilosophie* is an essentially pointless exercise? Clearly one cannot legitimate Schelling's *Naturphilosophie*, at the level of the usable scientific results which it produces. Why not, then, simply regard nature materialistically and see our cognitive access to it in essentially pragmatic terms?"[118] Schelling's cardinal shortcoming has to do with the dialectic, not in the sense of Habermas' criticism (that Schelling falls back into pre-dialectical philosophy) but in the sense that he deliberately abstains from advancing a *thorough and fully transparent* dialectical explanation.

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116 See A. Bowie, *Schelling and Modern European Philosophy,* and A. White, *Schelling: an Introduction into the System of Freedom.* These claims are only partially correct. It is true that Hegel derives from Schelling but, at the same time, "*if* Hegel succeeded in accomplishing the feat – and one must underscore that 'if' – then he accomplished something for Schelling which Schelling could not have accomplished for himself" (George J. Seidel, *Activity and Ground: Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel* pp. 35–6).

117 Hegel, HP3, 515; VGP3, 423.

118 A. Bowie, *Schelling and Modern European Philosophy,* p. 42.

His irresolute stance can be easily explained. Schelling restores metaphysics but, at the same time, he is painfully aware of the abyss between finite and infinite reason, and this distinction generates an ever-increasing irrationalism in his philosophy. Defending Schelling from such a charge, Bowie argues that Schelling's stance indeed created the space for the later vitalism of Bergson, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche but Schelling himself rejected vitalism and did not descend into irrationalism.[119] However, the issue is not whether Schelling is concerned with vitalism or not. Vitalism would be an equally metaphysical concept. The main issue is that it is metaphysics that concerns the philosopher. Therefore, purposefulness of nature must either be self-generated (e.g., as vitalism) or the result of something else (e.g., as the absolute). That Schelling chooses the latter is not the cardinal problem. Schelling begins to pursue a conceptual explanation of the unity and difference (between the mechanical and the organic, the real and ideal, the finite and infinite); but, realizing the gap between essence and existence, he never proceeds to relativize the absolute (by containing it, for instance, within the frames of *Logic*, as Hegel does). By the same token, in the elaboration of dialectic, Schelling remains halfway and never deliberately advances the issue of a new cognitive logic.

Ilyenkov assesses Schelling's ambiguity from a pointed methodological angle. According to Ilyenkov, Schelling found it impossible to ascribe purposefulness to the organism itself, agreeing with the conclusions of the *Critique of Judgement*. Schelling succeeded in portraying nature as a dynamic process but grasped exoterically and formally. Thus, he invoked the concept of intuition in the role of a cover up for the principal inadmissibility of a fully conceptual explanation of contradictions: those between the real and the ideal, the finite and infinite, reason and nature, etc. Schelling refused to rationally articulate the conversion from the one to the other, to accept the transition as an inherent characteristic of finite rationality, which is capable of treating the opposites as identical to each other. It is as if Schelling, in his own terms, retained a latent dualism: on the one side, the subjective judgments, and, on the other side, the object itself. How can their connection be grasped,

119 *Ibid.*, p. 34ff.

then? Once it is impossible to express it logically (through concepts), other solutions must be invoked: intuition, art, and the work of genius. I have already discussed that, for Schelling, intuition is what makes possible the construction of knowledge and of philosophy itself. As Ilyenkov puts it:

> The moment of the transition itself, was *irrational*, and could not be expressed by a *non-contradictory concept,* because of that very moment that the transition from A to –A took place, i.e. their coincidence, their *identity.* To express it in a concept meant to smash the form of the concept … Schelling, beginning with a quite justified statement of the fact that logic in its Kantian conception actually put an insurmountable barrier in the way of attempts to understand, that is to *express, the fact of the transformation of the opposites into one another in concepts,* i.e., in rigorously defined determinations, took the step toward rejection of *logic in general.* It did not even occur to him to reform *logic itself* in order to make it a means of expressing what appeared in intuition (contemplation) as a self-evident fact. Instead he began to make up for and compensate the limitedness and insufficiency of the existing logic (mistaken by him as the inferiority of thought as such), by the force of intellectual and aesthetic intuition, an absolutely irrational capacity that it was impossible either to study or to teach.[120]

Advancing this claim, Ilyenkov walks a thin line between a plausible monistic dialectic on the one hand, and the risk of falling back into Spinozistic metaphysics on the other. His charge that Schelling grasped natural purposefulness exoterically and formally is characteristic of such a tendency. For in fact, Schelling did not reject natural purposiveness but, to the contrary, *incorporated natural into divine purposefulness.*[121] It is that contrast between

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120 E.V. Ilyenkov, *Dialectical Logic,* pp. 158, 159–60.

121 As E. Cassirer comments, the resurrection of Nature in Schelling, "wäre nicht möglich, wenn die Natur nicht einen selbständigen geistigen Wert und Ursprung besäße, wenn nicht auch ihr selbst eine eigentümliche schöpferische Kraft innewohnte, die derjenigen der einen Intelligenz verwandt und analogist." E. Cassirer, *Das Erkenntnisproblem in der Philosophie und Wissenschaft der Neueren Zeit.*, p. 230.

human and divine reason that confines Schelling on the issue of dialectic, for his dialectic is aimed at the absolute and ahistorical rather than at the relative and historical. Such is the deep dividedness that marks Schelling's philosophy.

The question arises: Is Schelling a Spinozist? In his attempt to demonstrate Schelling's relevance to current discourses, Bowie ascribes the notion of substance to Schelling instead of Spinoza and juxtaposes the two, implying that Spinoza is a "physicalist."[122] It remains inexplicable how Schelling can utter that "real and ideal are only different views of one and the same substance"[123] without being a Spinozist. The issue is not that Schelling is not a Spinozist, but that he is equally Spinozist as he is Neoplatonist. The quandary that Spinoza faces and that Schelling wants to overcome is not only to posit but to *explain* the ideal as a modus of the real, as a function of substance that knows its own self. Schelling is quite compatible with Spinoza, but only with regard to the objective principle of cognition. Having shown that intelligence in its creative activity arises from nature, Schelling does not stop there but invokes the subjective principle of Kant and Fichte. Subjective and objective principles offer the recipe for the presentation of the absolute, in Hegel's later expression, not merely as substance but also as subject. The absolute is neither nature nor spirit, but both.

Further, just like Spinoza, Schelling orients himself toward metaphysical philosophy, *philosophia prima*. Undertaking *philosophia prima* means aiming at a finality in the subject-object relationship, which is impossible to uphold. Defying *philosophia prima* makes it possible to discern the point where finite reason settles for its limitations and accepts its historical relativity. Is that Schelling's point? Bowie argues:

> The vital point … is that this relativity does not entail relativism, because it depends precisely upon a higher absolute principle for relativity to be comprehensible at all. It is the Absolute that explains the fact that knowledge continually changes. As such, it is only by showing

122 A. Bowie, *op. cit.,* pp. 79ff.
123 Cited from Bowie, *op. cit.,* p. 80.

> the need for the Absolute that we avoid relativism, but in becoming aware of the Absolute via the failure of reflection we make all determinate knowledge relative. We do this, though, without giving up the pursuit of a better account of the world that is inherent in the attempt to say the truth . . . Any determinate answer to the question of *what* the absolute is would of course introduce relativity.[124]

The above argument is correct in exhibiting Schelling's realization of the gap between God and finite beings. The quandary, however, is that Schelling himself attempts an explanation of God by means of finite reason and also explains finite knowledge by appealing to the Absolute. He, thus, correlates the relativity of finite reason to the absoluteness of infinite reason the latter being even presupposed as the foundation of his argument. As Bowie puts it, "both Schelling and Hegel are confronted with the question of the transition from the Absolute to the world of finitude because they agree, though not for the same reasons, that finitude, relativity, leads one to the need for the Absolute."[125] Such a claim is correct with respect to metaphysics as the pursuit of the ultimate answers of being. If thinking is inevitably grounded on metaphysical assumptions, metaphysics is inescapable. But metaphysics is inevitable only as the "first philosophy," as the search for absolute certainty. And vice-versa: absolute certainty merges with metaphysical certainty, which is unattainable unless carried out in terms of the Absolute. The argument is circular, as Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel have each shown. Frederick Beiser offers a good insight on this issue:

> From in his early years Schelling saw something that many of his contemporaries, and many still today, fail to appreciate. He recognized that the solution to the fundamental problems of epistemology requires nothing less than metaphysics.[126]

Unqualified certainty merges with metaphysical certainty. The dividedness in Kant's epistemological assertiveness, additionally

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124 *Ibid.*, pp. 66, 71.
125 *Ibid.*, p. 86.
126 F. Beiser, *German Idealism: The Struggle Against Subjectivism,* p. 466.

amplified by Fichte's *démarche*, reaches its logical end in Schelling. This is the very core of Schelling's advance which determines his place in the logic of development of the discourse in German idealism. But my contention here is the following: Why should that be the case? Philosophy as a theory of human knowledge, as a reflection on its historical conditions and horizons, and as a meta-theory is not necessarily meta-physics. With respect to finite reason alone, what does it mean to know absolutely or to be absolutely certain? No science advances such claims besides metaphysical philosophy.

Therefore, when Schelling insists "upon defending a conception of reason, despite his demonstration that we can neither prove from within reason why there is reason nor ground reason via its own operations,"[127] one needs to sharply define *which reason* he has in mind: finite or infinite, man or God? Accepting the abyss between the two, Schelling necessarily turns to less transparent ways of articulating[128] the problematic of God. Still, he does deal with that issue as he attempts to crack the code of creation. Bowie argues that Schelling "is also concerned not to fall back into the metaphysics which Kant had destroyed."[129] However, it is difficult to conceive how Schelling's inquiries into the nature of God do not represent a restoration of pre-Kantian metaphysics. Although Schelling acknowledges the gap between absolute ground and its determinations,[130] he does so while being entangled in metaphysical philosophy. Such is the sharp dividedness of his doctrine.

In the context of the above discussion, one may assess Schelling's polemic against Hegel. With respect to the gap between finite and infinite reason, Schelling's objections are substantial, and his

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127 A. Bowie, *op. cit.,* p. 78.

128 Cf. how Dale Snow closes her inquiry on Schelling's philosophy: "Schelling felt, rather, that he and others had exposed the pretensions of reason and did not flinch from recognizing the dark side of the will, but were unwilling to cast their allegiance exclusively with either side, leaving Christian metaphysics the only place to stand." D. Snow, *Schelling and the End of Idealism,* p. 215.

129 A. Bowie, *op. cit.,* p. 38, etc.

130 Bowie even argues that Schelling articulates the distinction between identity and difference better than Derrida's *différance*. See *ibid.* pp. 67–75.

criticism is, in my opinion, justifiable and worth a more detailed look. Hegel reduces real being to the concept and inverts the subject-object relationship. Thus, Schelling reminds Hegel, "concepts as such do in fact exist nowhere but in consciousness, they *are*, therefore, taken objectively *after* nature, not *before* it" (GNP, 140; HMP, 145). Schelling rightfully points to the fact that if the Idea were logically expressed, then *Logic* should be a part of the system, not vice versa. Such unjustified reversal is what takes place in Hegel's system, in which "the Idea is imprisoned in logic and thus no step toward progress is possible" (see esp. GNP, 151ff; HMP, 152ff). Nature is not outside the logic but within it, and, therefore, Hegel's God "is not free from the world but burdened with it instead" (GNP, 159; HMP, 159). In his *Aphorisms*, Schelling puts it otherwise: "If God were for us a logical abstraction, then we would have to follow him with logical necessity" (AEN, 394).

Schelling is convincing in claiming that "Hegel had already presupposed *intuition* with the first step of his *Logic* and could not take a single step without assuming it" (GNP, 138; HMP, 143). Schelling properly charges Hegel with complete disregard for the subject-object difference, claiming that the concept from the beginning has an object for itself (GNP, 133; HMP, 139). To be fair, Schelling overlooks here the role that the *Phenomenology* plays in the articulation of Hegel's system[131] and, hence, ignores the nature and objectives of the *Logic*. As a matter of fact, Hegel had presupposed intuition at the beginning of the *Phenomenology*, at the time when consciousness swings between itself and the object. (I shall analyze this issue in the next chapter.) Once the ambiguity of consciousness is overcome, and at the end of the *Phenomenology* the subject-object opposition collapses,[132] Hegel finds it acceptable to expose

131 For a good discussion of Schelling's criticism from such angle, see A. White, *Knowledge. Hegel and the Problem of Metaphysics* (Athens (Ohio): Ohio University Press, 1983), pp. 15–90.

132 Hegel's method is allegedly without presupposition, but *Logic* is indeed grounded on presuppositions. These are located in the *Phenomenology*. Schelling's, and Feuerbach's criticism, as well as the criticism of contemporary commentators (e.g., M. Frank's defense of Schelling in *Der Unendliche Mangel an Sein),* is in vain without this distinction.

the nature of reason in its dialectical "purity" i.e., as already capable of being simultaneously identical and different, finite and infinite, etc. It is only with the results of the *Phenomenology* in mind that Hegel "threw himself into the methodological discussion in such a way that he thereby completely forgot the questions which lay outside it" (GNP, 143; HMP, 147). Once Hegel attains the absolute (the contention of the *Phenomenology*) the remaining task is to depict it logically (in the *Logic*). Respectively, only when the identification of being and thought is challenged, then one comes to realize the role of intuition on the outset of the *Logic*.

Schelling properly wonders about Hegel's unwarranted reduction of the absolute to the concept, whereas the concept expresses nothing but the properly desired logical nature of science. He rightfully mentions that "the concept for its own part would lie completely immobile if it were not the concept of a thinking subject, i.e., if it were not thought" (GNP, 132; LHP, 138–9). Had Schelling attacked the deduction of absolute knowing in the *Phenomenology* and the simultaneous relativization of the absolute (the deification of logic and the logicalization of the divine), then he would have been able to ground his truthful and profound criticism of Hegel.

Being unquestionably correct in his contentions, Schelling does not attack Hegel's shortcomings from the proper angle. But this is not the result of a merely myopic analysis. It happens because *Schelling is not disturbed by the metaphysical task itself, but rather by the transparency of Hegel's argument.* Both he and Hegel advance explorations in metaphysics yet follow different paths of articulation. Many commentators have pointed out[133] that Schelling's criticism, advanced well after the philosopher relapsed into irrationalism and based on different understanding of the identification of thought and being, is also a self-criticism of his own earlier program. Schelling's criticism nevertheless does not amount to a rejection of the program itself.

The vulnerability of Schelling in relation to Hegel concerns the expansion of dialectic. Whereas Schelling and Hegel stand on the

133 See, for example, R.-P. Horstmann, *Die Grenzen der Vernunft,* pp. 245–68; K. Goudeli, *Challenges to German Idealism*, p. 94.

same side of the barricade in reviving metaphysics, *methodologically*, with respect to the logic of cognition, the stakes had already been raised by Schelling's former friend and companion. Nevertheless, Schelling is also accountable for the advances of Hegel. Schelling remained halfway on the methodological issue, but by upholding dialectic in the object and by setting forth being as becoming, he "exposed the rigidity of Kant's logic. And though he did not set himself the task of reforming it radically, he prepared the ground very thoroughly for Hegel."[134]

It is noteworthy that Schelling rejects Hegel as Kant had initially endorsed and then rejected Fichte, and as Fichte had initially endorsed and then rejected Schelling. Late Schelling turns to ever less rational methods of articulation of metaphysics (viz. philosophy revelation, philosophy of mythology), while Hegel becomes the influential figure in the post-Kantian discourse with the major problems being science, system, philosophical idealism, and the need for a new logic of investigation, new rationality beyond formal logic. Hegel plainly sets forth the task of a new cognitive logic. The intricacy, however, is that the hunt for a new logic is at once the hunt for the absolute; and the new logic is explained by its own self, for *it is* the absolute.

It is accommodating to remind ourselves where the Kantian dualism has led. Once the concept, the idea, the spiritual is unequivocally turned to the primary (to an absolute and, in Hegel's words, "the only truly existing"), the road to cognitive arrogance, which Fichte's furious attacks against skepticism had opened, is now accomplished. Kantian humility is abandoned.[135] For the *representation* of the absolute is possible only in ideas, only in the realm of thought. However, idealism will claim precisely that these two are close relatives, and that the latter is the expression of the former. Our capabilities of idealization are turned into

134 E.V. Ilyenkov, *Dialectical Logic,* p. 160.

135 To be fair, this has to do primarily with Hegel. Schelling, as already mentioned, eventually retreated to less rational ways of articulation of metaphysics, and was always charging Hegel with misusing his own ideas. Yet Schelling himself, in a less transparent way, does the same: He attempts to crack the code of the absolute.

an expression of the objectively existing ideal, which produces the real (instead of being produced by it). As Hegel proudly proclaims, "When anything whatever possesses truth, it possesses it through its Idea, or, something possesses truth only insofar as it is Idea."[136] It is not by coincidence that when Hegel acknowledges that post-Kantian transcendental Idealism did away with the thing-in-itself, he praises this step from the standpoint of Absolute Idealism.

> Der konsequenter durchgeführte transzendentale Idealismus hat die Nichtigkeit des von der kritischen Philosophie noch übriggelassenen Gespensts des *Ding-an-sich*, dieses abstrakten, von allem Inhalt abgeschiedenen Schattens erkannt und den Zweck gehabt, ihn vollends zu zerstören. Auch machte diese Philosophie den Anfang, *die Vernunft aus sich selbst ihre Bestimmungen darstellen zu lassen.*[137]

Although rejecting the thing-in-itself, one cannot avoid mentioning the impressive similarity of the above passage with what Kant wants to do in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, namely, to examine "*was die Vernunft gänzlich aus sich selbst hervorbringt.*"

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136 Hegel, SL, 755; WL1, 462.
137 Hegel, SL, 47; WL1, 41 – italics mine.

CHAPTER THREE

FROM METAPHYSICS TO EPISTEMOLOGY I: FROM THE *PHENOMENOLOGY* TO THE *LOGIC* OR HEGEL'S CLAIM FOR ABSOLUTE KNOWING AND ITS MEANING

Contradictio est regula veri, noncontradictio, falsi
Hegel

I. Idealism, Reason, and Contradiction in the Early Hegel

Hegel begins his career as a disciple of his younger friend Schelling, and for a long period remains under Schelling's influence. Yet already in Hegel's early writings, the seeds of development beyond Schelling are evident, as was the growth beyond Fichte in Schelling's own early writings. Almost all of the concepts that Hegel will later use are present and actualized to different degrees in his early works. On the question of the exact time of Hegel's emancipation from Schelling's influence, as well as the appearance of certain concepts that are important for his mature system, there is already a wealth of in-depth scholarship.[1] It has

1 With regard to the coming to be of Hegel's dialectic, and its relation to Hegel's religious-metaphysical objectives, see M. Baum, *Die Entstehung der Hegelschen Dialektik* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1986); K. Düsing, *Das Problem der Subjektivität in Hegels Logik. Systematische und Entwicklungsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zum Prinzip des Idealismus und zur Dialektik.* Hegel-Studien, Beiheft 15, 3. Aufl (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1995); W.S. Hartkopf, *Der Durchbruch zur Dialektik in Hegels Denken* (Meisehneim am Glan: Anton Hein, 1976); H.V. Kimmerle,. *Das Problem der Abgeschlossenheit des Denkens. Hegels System der Philosophie in den Jahren 1800–4.* Hegel Studien, Beiheft 8 (Bonn: Bouvier, 1970); G. Lukács, *The Young Hegel*, trans. R. Livingstone (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1975); N.V. Motroshilova, *Put' Gegelia k Nauke Logiki* [*Hegel's Path Toward the* Science of Logic] (Moskva: Nauka, 1984); R. Schäfer, *Die Dialektik und ihre besonderen Formen in Hegels Logik. Entwicklungsgeschichtliche und Systematische Untersuchungen* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner Verlag, 2001).

been shown that Hegel moves beyond Schelling as early as the *Differenzschrift*[2] and makes distinct use of several concepts, including those that are of specific importance for the current treatise such as the notion of contradiction,[3] the relation between reason and understanding, and the notion of speculation. In what follows I will present an introductory outline of these issues, which is functional for the progression of my analysis in the following sections.

That Hegel endorses the importance of totality and system hardly needs specific substantiation. In the oceanic bibliography on Hegel, these two concepts are, perhaps, the least disputed. The organic unity of the manifold, life as the expression of that differentiated unity (the young Hegel defines life as a union of union an ununion: "*Das Leben sei die Verbindung der Verbindung und der Nichtverbindung*") (GW, 422; ETR, 312), and the notion of God as the crowning of the unity, are the motives that underline his early writings. Relevant to such an understanding is the integrative function of philosophy, which is circumscribed as a meta-science, a

2 As a matter of fact, there are well-substantiated arguments that it is Hegel who exercises influence on Schelling even in the period of the *System of Transcendental Idealism*. See K. Düsing, "Spekulation und Reflexion, Zur Zusammenarbeit Schellings und Hegels in Jena," in *Hegel Studien*, 5 (1969), pp. 95–128; G. Lukács, *The Young Hegel*, pp. 241ff.

3 For instance, R. Schäfer shows that the young Hegel treats the Kantian antinomies of reason (and the necessity of contradiction therein) in a way very similar to his mature position. See R. Schäfer, *Die Dialektik und ihre besonderen Formen in Hegels Logik*, pp. 51–60. W. Hartkopf ("Die Anfänge der Dialektik bei Schelling und Hegel," in *Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung*, 30 (1976), pp. 545–66) argues that the use of the term "contradiction" as distinct from "opposition" in Hegel's early writings is probably due to Schelling's influence (p. 552ff). Although Schelling's narration does follow the logic of contradiction, the category as such is rarely addressed in his early work. He comes to explicitly discuss the issue only in his middle period.

For a rare and textually oriented treatment of the issue of contradiction in Hegel's early texts, see S-J. Kang, *Reflexion und Widerspruch. Eine entwicklungsgeschichtliche und systematische Untersuchung des Hegelschen Begriffs des Widerspruchs,* Hegel Studien, Beiheft 41 (Bonn: Bouvier, 1999), pp. 19–90.

science of sciences, an encyclopedia containing the fundamental principles of the development of cognition in all its aspects, i.e., natural, social, and religious:

> Philosophy, as a totality of knowledge produced by reflection, becomes a system, that is, an organic whole of concepts, whose highest law is not the understanding intellect, but reason (DZ, 35–6; Diff., 103).

The early Hegel has no doubt about the systematic, scientific, and apodictic nature of philosophical inquiry,[4] the chief device of which is reason, reason as expressing the "urge toward totality" and "completeness" (DZ, 15, Diff., 85), reason emerging as the "need to overcome division" (*Entzweiung*, DZ, 20; Diff., 89).

In his analysis of the preceding tradition in the *Differenzschrift*, Hegel resolutely sides with Schelling. He charges Kant and Fichte with mistreating the object[5] and backs Schelling's attempt to establish reason as evolving from nature and history. Put in this way, reason retains in Hegel the intersubjective dimension that was added to it by Schelling. Reason is thus multifunctional, associated with the object and device of philosophical discourse as well as with the absolute. The latter is eternal and reason is its appearance. As the science of reason *par excellence*, philosophy necessarily emerges as a unifying power of life that overcomes the limitations set by the understanding. The distinction here denotes a specific Hegelian emphasis that is not directly discernable in Schelling's writings. The young Hegel already advances a critique of the one-sidedness of the understanding for setting the opposites apart; he enforces reason as the faculty that brings

4 N.V. Motroshilova, *Put' Gegelia k Nauke Logiki* [*Hegel's Path Toward the* Science of Logic], p. 62ff.

5 Cf. R. Lauth, *Hegel, Critique de la Doctrine de la Science de Fichte*, (Paris: Vrin, 1987), esp. Ch. 1. In defending Fichte accross the board, Lauth does not account for Hegel's charge that Fichte mistreats nature, but rather stresses Fichte's defense of the subjective element of cognition. Hegel is certainly not against that, but he as a broader objective, that of *absolute* cognition. And, following Schelling, he acknowledges that an account of absolute cognition must necessarily incorporate nature.

them together.[6] The result is the unification of real and the ideal, of freedom and necessity, what Hegel at this period simply calls *Wissen* (several years later he will draw a sharp distinction between *Wissen* and *Erkennen*). It is also noteworthy that Hegel does not yet pass judgment on the concept of intellectual intuition,[7] but simply sees it as "the absolute principle of philosophy, the one real ground and firm standpoint in Fichte as well as in Schelling" (DZ, 114; Diff., 173) and endorses it as the connecting device for the solution of the Kantian antinomies.

At the time of publication of the *Critical Journal*, it becomes clear that Hegel is not only Schelling's disciple but also a mature thinker capable of injecting his own distinctive ideas into philosophical criticism. Hegel's essay *On the Relation of Speculation to Common Human Understanding* manifests both a pointed view on philosophy as a unifying system as well as his take on the distinctive functions of understanding and reason. The latter distinction is now viewed as the means to overcome Kantian skepticism. Hegel's anti-skeptical stance is further developed and explicitly articulated in the essay *On the Relation of Skepticism to Philosophy*, in which he formulates the deeply dialectical understanding of skepticism that is characteristic of his mature position. Hegel does not reject skepticism *per se* but emphasizes the conceptual nature of any beyond, any inner of things (VSP, 219–20; RSP, 318–9). He sees the positive side of skepticism in that it "can be described as a *philosophy* which *does not go beyond consciousness*" (VSP, 220; RSP, 318), as a philosophy that can admit certainty within finite reason. That is, very early on Hegel chooses the only possible way to overcome skepticism if one wants to pursue unconditional certainty, namely by identifying being and thought. In this context, true cognition *does* incorporate skepticism; it is:

6 The "speculation" of reason's infinite thinking is different "reflection" in finite thinking. In order to cognize the absolute (which is the objective of metaphysics), one has to destroy finite cognition. For a good discussion of this issue see R. Schäfer, *Die Dialektik und ihre besonderen Formen in Hegels Logik*, Ch. 1.

7 K. Düsing, *Das Problem der Subjektivität in Hegels Logik*, p. 64.

> found *implicit* in every genuine philosophical system; for it is the free side of every philosophy. If in any one proposition that expresses a cognition of Reason, its reflected aspect – the concepts that are contained in it – is isolated, and the way that they are bound together is considered, it must become evident that these concepts are together sublated, or in other words they are united in such way that they contradict themselves; otherwise it would not be a proposition of Reason but only of understanding … but the cause is only cause, inasmuch as it is opposed to the effect; … the one is posited as identical with the many, substance as identical with its attributes.
>
> In that every such proposition of Reason permits resolution into two strictly contradictory assertions, e.g., God is cause and God is not cause; He is one and not one, many and not many; He has an essence which is itself eliminated once more, since essence can only be comprehended in antithesis to form, and His form must be posited as identical with His essence; and so on. Thus the principle of skepticism: "*παντί λόγοι λόγος ίσος αντίκειται*" ["against every argument there is an equal one on the other side"][8] comes on the scene at its full strength. The so called "principle of contradiction" is thus so far from possessing even formal truth for Reason, that on the contrary every proposition of Reason must in respect of concepts contain a violation of it. To say that a proposition is merely formal means for Reason, that it is posited alone and on its own account, without the equal affirmation of the contradictory that is opposed to it; and just for that reason it is false. To recognize the principle of contradiction as a formality, thus means to cognize its falsity at the same time. – Since every genuine philosophy has this negative side, or always sublates the principle of contradiction, anyone who has the urge can set this negative side in relief and set forth himself a skepticism out of each of them (VSP, 229, 230; RSP, 324, 324–5).

Skepticism is one side of thought, the other being dogmatism, whereas true philosophy combines both contradictory stances. Yet this comparison is not merely parallel to the Kantian use of these terms as synonyms of rationalism and empiricism. For it is questionable whether Kant himself presented a true combination of the two.

8 Sextus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, I, 12, 18, 202–5 [Hegel's note].

On the one hand, he is closer to rationalism than to empiricism, but on the other hand he introduces the thing-in-itself and redefines the scope and limitations cognition. Thus, Kant essentially remains a skeptic. In contrast, the young Hegel already assigns to the faculty of reason more authority than Kant ever would have allowed. Hegel is thus on the way to solving the problem of skepticism in a new way.

Beyond exhibiting Hegel's stance toward skepticism, the passage above is also illuminating in respect to the role of contradiction in cognition. Understanding the centrality of this concept from the very beginning of his career, Hegel candidly portrays contradiction as the innermost characteristic of being. On this question he is much more explicit than Schelling had been just a few months earlier in the *System of Transcendental Idealism*. Albeit indirectly, the passage also shows the distinct path that both Hegel and Schelling had chosen, namely, to overturn Kant in the direction of metaphysics and to connect the overcoming of contradictions with the identification of being and thought.

Hegel is explicit about his metaphysical objectives and declares that "the beginning of philosophy must, of course, be elevation above the truth which ordinary consciousness gives, and the presentiment of a higher truth" (VSP, 240; RSP, 332). He is also lucid about the supra-individual nature of reason that carries out the metaphysical undertaking: "the interest of speculative Reason – is the problem of *explaining* the *origin* of human cognition of things; to spy out for the conditioned existence, what exists unconditioned" (VSP, 253; RSP, 341).

The possibility of unconditioned knowledge or knowledge of the unconditioned was categorically renounced by Kant. The instigator of German idealism associated such an endeavor with the unhappiness and torment of reason. Moreover, Kant had strictly and absolutely separated human finite reason (which he did examine) from infinite divine reason (which he bequeathed to faith). Following Schelling, Hegel chooses to correlate the two and to claim already in the *Faith and Knowledge* that finitude disappears in the Idea (*In der Idee ist die Endlichkeit Verschwunden*-GW, 344; ETW, 230). This is an argument which, as I will show in the following sections, proves to be decisive in Hegel's deduction in the *Phenomenology*.

For now let us complete the overview of the young Hegel's intellectual evolution. The so-called *Systementwürfen* of the mid-1800s constitute a further demonstration of the correlation between finite and infinite reason, philosophy and metaphysics. Hegel characteristically calls his 1803/4 Jena lecture course "*Vorlesungen über Logik und Metaphysik*," and the exploration of the relationship between these two terms becomes his major occupation.[9] Characterizing the deduction of the categories as "the logic of the understanding," he perceives Fichte's system as a sample of such philosophizing, for Fichte wrongfully endeavors to arrive at absolute identity without the speculative method.[10]

Although more elaborate than his predecessors and contemporaries, Hegel's concept of the relationship among logic, dialectic and contradiction at the time of his Jena lectures is still unclear compared to his later stance (when dialectic emphatically *is* the logic). Dialectic is introduced for the first time in Hegel's 1804/5 *Logic*, a work that signifies the final turn to speculative logic, the latter being identified with metaphysics.[11] In that same work Hegel employs another important idea for his later explorations, that of infinity as a distinct logical category, denoting it as "absolute contradiction" and distinguishing it from "bad infinity."[12] The correlation of the two and the resolution of their contradiction is to be achieved through philosophy, not as a merely cognitive but as a metaphysical task. In this context of the annihilation of finitude, Hegel seeks to establish the metaphysical concept of absolute subjectivity. Distinct from Kant and Fichte, Hegel's theory of the subject is "metaphysical-theological,"[13] and thus parallels Schelling's.

In the 1805/6 Jena *Realphilosophie*, Hegel undertakes the first attempt at a speculative logic. His epistemological program is not

9 M. Heidegger, *Der Deutsche Idealismus*, p. 215.
10 K. Düsing, *op. cit.*, p. 124ff.
11 *Ibid.*, p. 151.
12 M. Baum, *Die Entstehung der Hegelschen Dialektik*, pp. 248ff.
13 K. Düsing, *op. cit.*, p. 189ff.

yet fully articulated, but the method of the work is deductive, and dialectic is therein incorporated through the exposition of contradiction and determinate negation. Reservations notwithstanding, it may be said that the Jena *Realphilosophie* signifies the overall completion of the formative period of Hegel's dialectic.[14] Dialectic is the method, and the goal is absolute subjectivity. Idealism as the search for the ideal in the real or the creation of the real by the ideal, contradiction, and logic are themes around which Hegel's thought revolves. Following Schelling, he advances the program of German idealism on a basis which, having in mind the breadth of his later system, is at once logical, theological, and metaphysical.[15]

Although elaborated on a foundation different from Kant's theory, Hegel's system is all-inclusive, incorporating in itself transcendental philosophy. In Hegel, transcendentalism is stretched in two opposite ways. First, he emphasizes the need of unity between the transcendental and the immanent. Hegel, as Schelling before him, abandons the *a priori – a posteriori* dilemma for the sake of different degrees of empirical sensitivity. The categories that rational science employs are both *a posteriori*, having their origin in the manifold, and *a priori*, expressing the anticipatory and legislative

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14 The completion of the formative period is not the same as the completion of the dialectic itself. Although I argue that the young philosopher is interested in, and makes use of, an increasing number of dialectical concepts, as a point of reference for Hegel's dialectic one must surely take the mature system. On that, I agree with K. Düsing, M. Baum and others. For instance, R. Schäfer shows there are differences in the conception of dialectic even between the 1807 *Phenomenology* and the 1812 *Logic*. The position here is striking but makes very good sense. See R. Schäfer, *Die Dialektik und ihre besonderen Formen in Hegels Logik*, ch. 3. Werner Hartkopf's suggestion about Hegel's complete dialectical "breakthrough" in his pre-1800 writings is unconvincing (see W.S. Hartkopf, *Der Durchbruch zur Dialektik in Hegels Denken*, pp. 44ff).

15 See also V. Hösle, *Hegels System. Der Idealismus der Subjektivität und das Problem der Intersubjektivität* (Hamburg: Meiner Verlag, 1988), pp. 55ff., and 62ff.

nature of the constructions of reason.[16] The latter indicates the second stretch, namely, that philosophical reason is employed as a device for metaphysical knowledge and knowledge of the divine.

Hegel grew up in a religious environment. Expressed already in his student essays and first philosophical writings, Hegel's religious concerns were never abandoned but rather incorporated in his mature philosophy, which is underlined by the striving for metaphysical reconciliation of all irreconcilable things, all seen from the same *logical* angle. The finite and the infinite, the real and the ideal, the human and the divine, the religious and the secular, all these are addressed as facets of the same problem: the logic of absolute cognition, which is equated to the logic of the divine and to divine logic. Such an endeavor seems unattainable, for it requires full transparency and rejects the moment of transcendence. It is no wonder that although Hegel's philosophy has been the subject of openly religious interpretations, his resolutely gnostic attitude almost never earned him much esteem among official religious institutions.

That there is a profound metaphysical religious dimension in Hegel's thought is unquestionable. The religious-spiritualistic facet of Hegel's philosophy with its imaginative, poetic, and eschatological power, as well as its speculative (as opposed to transcendental) approach to viewing "the divine as epistemological principle,"[17]

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16 This position should not be misinterpreted. I will be challenging the view that Hegel is a clear-cut transcendental philosopher. Similarly, it is not accurate to say that Hegel does away with transcendentalism as, for example, M. Forster claims. See M. Forster, *Hegel's Idea of a* Phenomenology of Spirit (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), pp. 161–7. As a matter of fact, in Hegel's view, everything accepts ideal descriptions (I would call them "quasi-a priori"), but these are not reached right away as the starting point of knowledge is always immediacy. Each side taken separately creates misunderstanding.

17 J. L. Vieillard-Baron, *Hegel et l'idéalisme allemand* (Paris: Vrin: 1999), p. 162ff.; An older but still influential interpretation of this kind is I.A. Ilin I. A. *Filosofia Gegelia Kak Uchenye O Konkretnosty Boga Y Cheloveka* [*Hegel's Philosophy as a Doctrine of the Concreteness of God and Man*] (Moscow: Nauka, 1994). This work was first published in 1918. [German Transl: Ilin I. A. *Die Philosophie Hegels als Kontemplative Gotteslehre* (Bern: A. Francke, 1946)].

are, to be sure, issues rarely raised in recent Hegel scholarship. Heidegger was correct when he maintained that Hegel's philosophy is a theology or, as a French Heideggerian recently put it, a "theophany"[18] the appearing of the divine in the real world. But this is merely the one side of the story of the absolute idealist. At the same time, Hegel's entirely logicized God, by being impossible as merely *beyond* the world, is nowhere close to any other God, not even to Schelling's tormented absolute of the *Weltalter*. Hegel's God is not tormented but, according to the *Phenomenology*, is in "absolute dismemberment" (*absolute Zerrissenheit* – PG, 36; PS, 19) in the real world. God is at the same time non-God in the most emphatic sense. Hegel's interest in the real is profound and intimate, and occasionally the impression is created that the absolute dissipates, vanishes in the real, and does not exist as such at all. For in the same way in which the absolute idealist challenges the self-sufficiency of *ὕλη*, he would challenge the self-sufficiency of the absolute. But Hegel would have never come to *choose* between the traditional God and the dialectic. The former for him *is* the latter. Hegel's God is then a truly odd absolute, a "counterfeit double,"[19] one that emerges only at the very end (the end of all!) to utter that it exists solely and exclusively in the entire preceding process.

Nevertheless, to hold that Hegel is an atheist is no less accurate than to say that he is a traditional religious philosopher. A great number of contemporary Hegel scholars (Pinkard, Ilyenkov, Winfield, Rockmore, and many others) interpret Hegel almost as a latent atheist who only at one moment lapses into religion and metaphysics in his "metaphorical" admission that his *Science of Logic* portrays the divine mind before the creation of nature. Such an appropriation is closer to the philosopher's spirit than to his letter. As a matter of fact, claims about the possibility of cognition of God *are spread throughout Hegel's writings*, and, to say the least,

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18 P. Grosos, *Système et Subjectivité. Etude sur la signification et l'enjeu du concept de système Fichte, Hegel, Schelling* (Paris: Vrin, 1996), pp. 159ff.

19 Desmond W., *Hegel's God: a Counterfeit Double?* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005). Desmond "complains" (p. 1) that the more he reads Hegel, the more convinced he becomes that Hegel's God is no God.

it is not likely that they are mere metaphors. Hegel explicitly portrays his philosophy as rational religion, defining philosophy as the unification of religion and art, and, in many passages, talking about *coincidence* between philosophy and religion, indicating that the two differ only in the method of reaching God. Adopting an Aristotelian tone at the end of the *Encyclopedia*, Hegel even writes that only God is truly actual.

Hegel's philosophy can be rendered as rational religion. It is one thing to advocate Hegel's profound relevance to contemporary discourse and another thing to dress his entire system in a contemporary costume.[20] I believe that those who have seen a rational theologian in Hegel (from Schelling and Marx to G. Lukács, Kroner, Heidegger, Hyppolite and many others) are correct and, indeed, closer to the philosopher's letter.[21] That there is a rise in the stress on the spirit of Hegel as opposed to his letter is, I suppose, a sign of times: recent scholarship tends to disregard how intimate the relationship between philosophy and religion has been, as well as how significant the role of religious institutions in society was in only the recent past. In terms of religion, Vittorio Hösle has put it

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20 For example, following Hartmann's widely spread interpretation, Alan White reads Hegel as proffering a transcendental categorical ontology. Defending Hegel from Schelling's attacks, White is forced to concede: "While the ontological interpretation thus avoids the main thrust of Schelling's attack, it must be acknowledged that Hegel's prose is at least partly responsible for Schelling's reading" (A. White, *Absolute Knowledge*, p. 88). It is at least mysterious why Schelling, Hegel's friend, contemporary, and immediate participant in the debate, was "at least partly" misguided by Hegel's "prose," whereas current scholarship is able to avoid the trap.

21 For a recent good restatement of this intepretation, see I. Harnischmacher, *Der metaphysische Gehalt der Hegelschen Logik* (Stuttgart.: Frommann-Holzboog, 2001). The merits of Harnischmacher's book notwithstanding, he reproduces the often made error of metaphysical interpretations of Hegel. Although he properly underscores the role of the *Logic* as metaphysics, he disregards the constitutive role of the *Phenomenology* in Hegel's system and correspondingly, the necessity that the categories of the *Logic* are dispersed into reality. I will discuss this problem in detail in the following sections.

with accuracy: Hegel's philosophy presents a "negative proof" of the existence of God, a proof that is itself based on logic.[22] To sum up, neither of the two competing interpretations is by itself precise: for the philosopher of the absolute, there is no "either/or," but rather the compatibilist approach of "both/and." This fact alone explains why Hegel's philosophy is given quite diverse interpretations.

Hegel is known for arguing circularly (in this context, from the standpoint of the absolute), but at the same time he also claims to continue the task that was set by Schelling, the discovery of intelligence in nature. That is, Hegel clearly maintains that the adventure of knowledge begins with the senses. The otherwise absolute idealist advances a sharp critique against Kantian transcendentalism claiming to have demolished it by grounding knowledge on its original foundation, experience. It is at the same time obvious that knowledge is not reduced to its empirical source. How then can knowledge be explained?

As the above is of principal importance for the current treatise, I will examine Hegel's deduction in the *Phenomenology* to gauge whether it is permissible to move from the dialectic of sensuous consciousness all the way up to absolute knowing. My objective is not to present an academic commentary to the work as a whole,[23] for Hegel's position on the development of knowledge becomes transparent in the opening chapters. The problem of the relation between concept and empirical reality is also raised in the third part of Hegel's *Encyclopedia*, the *Philosophy of Mind*. However, in the *Philosophy of Mind*, the ontological framework of the *Logic* is already presupposed. It is the *Phenomenology of Spirit* that builds the bridge to the ontological structure of the *Logic*, and, therefore, it is in the *Phenomenology* where

22 V. Hösle, *Hegels System*, pp. 188ff., 242n. For a good debate over the ambiguous meaning of God in Hegel's philosophy see *The Owl of Minerva*, Vol. 36, Number 2 (Spring/Summer 2005).

23 On this question, too, there have been published many books. The formidable commentary of H.S. Harris, which was in the making for almost four decades, is about one and a half thousand pages long, long enough to be at the same time a commentary on the commentaries of the *Phenomenology*. See H.S. Harris, *Hegel's Ladder, Vol. 1: The Pilgrimage of Reason; Vol. 2: The Odyssey of Spirit* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997).

Hegel's argument can be best examined. The opening chapters of that work deserve the most detailed attention. I will interpret them having in mind Hegel's later claims in the *Logic*.

II. Hegel's *Phenomenology*. The Coming-to-be of the Self and the Question of Intersubjectivity

A. *The Dialectic of Sense-Certainty*

The opening sections of the *Phenomenology* are notoriously difficult. Many scholars argue that these are the most difficult passages in the entire history of philosophy, and several of them, especially those working in the analytic tradition, claim that nobody knows what Hegel is talking about. It is thus necessary here to put Hegel in the context of the preceding epistemological discussion in order to understand both where he is coming from and where he is going vis-à-vis the problem of knowledge.

First of all, Hegel does not presuppose an initial principle that formats the ground of his analysis. As it has already been argued, the epistemological pursuit of the initial principle that began with the Cartesian appeal to *cogito* was repeated in Kant's "transcendental unity of apperception," further interpreted in Reinhold's "propositions of consciousness," and reproduced in Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*. Fichte, acknowledging the irrefutability of the Cartesian *cogito* as attained through a *reductio ad absurdum*, at the same time reduced the thing-in-itself to a projection of the intuitively perceived I, and rejected Cartesian dualism in a way that is gnoseologically similar but ontologically opposed to Spinoza's monism. In Schelling, the epistemological starting point acquired a different structure. Schelling postulated an absolute reality or substance (an idea borrowed from Spinoza) which in itself would include subject and object and can be attained through intellectual intuition. Hegel follows Schelling in the search for the unconditioned, but he drastically shifts the epistemological stance and deliberately changes the search for an initial premise by proposing to ground knowledge on immediacy, on non-knowledge. According to this strategy, the truth is not grounded on, or deduced from, any *a priori* given postulate(s) but is established only at the end

of the argument. Instead of an initial proposition, Hegel claims to pursue the auto-motion of content. In this way, the truth (the absolute) is not just Schelling's "shot from a pistol"; it is not given from the beginning, but is rather the whole along with the process of its becoming. Such circular[24] strategy helps Hegel avoid all the difficulties of foundationalism. In addition, the notorious (often criticized as unjustified) transitions from one argument to the next in Hegel's text can be explained as necessitated from within the content itself rather than that dictated by any outside criterion (e.g., a formal logical one).

Hegel does not presuppose *any* rules as his starting point; he simply begins from the sense-data. It had already been admitted (but never demonstrated) by Kant that knowledge begins with the source of intuition. Once concepts and categories emerge, they mediate the process and the data is then *interpreted*. In order to reach interpretation, consciousness passes through a formative period, both phylogenetically and ontogenetically. Such was Schelling's addition to the discourse. Hegel now comes to interpret this formative period in fully rational and transparent terms, by doing away with any presupposition, by doing away with intellectual intuition, and by relying directly on experience to make his case.

In reaching toward sense-data, the absolute idealist radically diverges from transcendentalism, from Kant, and even more so from Fichte. Yet the restrictive epistemological starting point of the *Wissenschaftslehre* should not be discarded. In this context, Hegel's *Phenomenology* does have an existential presupposition. Consciousness, which takes the first steps toward knowledge, *exists*: it *is*. Thus, the lack of presuppositions must be specifically understood: not that it is *ex nihilo*, but that it is non-knowledge. In order to have knowledge, the I must not only have knowledge (as Hegel will demonstrate), but also must be; it must exist (as this was demonstrated by Fichte). Hegel does not and cannot accomplish a single step beyond Fichte without presupposing the *existence* of consciousness. The differentiating moment is that *epistemologically* Hegel does not

24 See Tom Rockmore, *Hegel's Circular Epistemology* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986).

claim to have found the first absolutely certain piece of knowledge in the mere existence of consciousness. Fichte had left behind a spurious duplicity in maintaining that *transcendental* knowledge can be demonstrated only in *empirical* existence. Balancing between axiomatic method and circularity, he had considered existence as already being a piece of knowledge (his critique against Descartes was that instead of "*I think*, therefore I am," he proposed "*I am* therefore I am" as his first epistemological principle). Contrary to that, Hegel takes existence as existence, not as knowledge.

Let us now move closer to the text of the *Phenomenology*. Hegel starts off in a realistic way, acknowledging at first the ordinary, "naïve" and non-reflective consciousness that finds itself opposed to some external reality. What is given in immediate sensuous experience is, at first glance, the richest because it includes in itself the possibility of all objects. Nevertheless, these objects are included in consciousness in a non-articulated, disordered way: nothing can be uttered about them except that *they are*, that they have being. Sensuous consciousness has no reason, reflection, or real *knowledge* of those objects. This level of analysis equals the chaotic representation of the object of cognition, the stage at which the object is intuitively perceived but not yet rationalized or systematized. Easy to see, sensuous consciousness is not only the richest but also the least cognitive, the "most abstract and poorest truth," because it knows only that "it *is*; and its truth contains nothing but the sheer being of the thing (*Sache*)" (PG, 82; PS, 58). The argument that unfolds here is similar to that of the first paragraphs of the *Logic*, in which the category of being is so rich as to include everything, and so poor as to be nothingness. In the *Phenomenology*, however, such dialectic is stripped of any ontological assumptions. These are yet to be established.

Sensuous consciousness identifies its object simply as a "this" (*Dieses*), for consciousness can utter nothing more about it. And it becomes already obvious that the "this" cannot by itself offer lasting truth. For instance, I say "this" and I mean a tree; I point to "this" and I mean a house, etc. "This" may be anything whatsoever. What is constant in the above utterances is the subject, the "I" as the common denominator. Accordingly, the "this" is identical with the "I," for any evidence about *the object* is at the same time knowledge *of the subject* about the object. The nub of Hegel's position,

the most essential facet of the entire *Phenomenology*, emerges from the outset as the subjective element of knowledge lingers over in the very first act of consciousness. Thus, wondering whether the truth is located in its own self or in the object, consciousness exists as a back-and-forth movement from itself toward the object and back toward itself.

Hegel pursues this dialectical relationship (between consciousness and its object) in detail, seeing each part as defined through the other, describing "this as I" on the one hand and "I as object" on the other, defining "the I through the object and the object through the I." The phenomenological narrative at this level is underlined by the clear subordination between subject and object, and it is important to emphasize Hegel's position, for his focus will crucially shift as his analysis progresses. For now, Hegel acknowledges that the object, unlike the subjective knowledge about it, is independent and primary for "it is regardless of whether it is known or not; and it remains, even if it is not known, whereas there is no knowledge if the object is not there" (PG, 84; PS, 59).

Similar issues related to knowledge emerge when one tries to further determine the meaning of "this" and breaks it down to "here" and "now." When somebody asks what "now" is, the answers could vary. It may be day, night, morning, noon, etc. And each "now" ceases from being so, as soon as one points at it. "Now it is morning," I say. It may be true. However, in a few hours the truth will be gone. "Now it is 10:14.52 a.m." This is true, but before I write the word, the time has passed and this truth is gone. Saying that "now is," Hegel argues, already means that the now "has been." The "now" itself has no essence, it is sublated and is a moment of a broader interplay along with several "nows" that come and go. The now is therefore just a movement *(Bewegung)*. The same dialectic unfolds when examining "here." "Here is a house." This may be true. But as soon as one moves a few steps away, or turns around, the truth disappears: the truth of the "here" becomes a tree, or a street, etc.

Both "here" and "now" are only one-sided moments of the "this," and at the same time negations of the latter. Neither is able to produce lasting knowledge. Nor does so the "not-this" (*Nicht-Dieses*) which, in a new round of Hegel's phenomenological analysis, becomes the otherness (*Anderssein*) of "this." For as soon as the

"not this" becomes the focus of attention of consciousness, as the "not this" is pointed at, it becomes a "this," the one that has to be negated.

The strategy of consciousness must change because the substitution of the one particular "this" for another one obviously leads nowhere. Thus, the conclusion of the opening discussion in the *Phenomenology* offers a first approximation of the central idea that Hegel wants to propel, namely, the importance of the universal. The "this" becomes in his analysis the "universal this," which is "the true content of sense-certainty … i.e., *Being in general*" (PG, 85; PS: 60). The truth of sensuous consciousness, the universal must be understood in a twofold way. The primary aspect is that the universal is the heterogeneous, chaotic manifold that is external to consciousness. The secondary aspect is that the universal is the universal of knowledge *qua* knowledge (that is, expressed ideally). Yet, what consciousness has no grasp of at this point is the dialectical nature of the universal. The universal is necessarily expressed through particulars, but neither do the particulars exhaust the universal, nor can the universal exist beyond the particulars without becoming itself a particular. Both moments have to be understood in their unity.

Consciousness falls into a series of cycles that contrast its own universality with the singularity of experience, and as a result comes to conclude that knowledge is just a "*Meinen.*" The selection of the word is intentional on two accounts. First, "*Meinen*" means *δόξα*, and in this sense knowledge is not but an opinion. Second, Hegel plays with the possessive meaning of the word in German, in which "*mein*" means "mine," that is, "belonging to me," to the subject. As a result, the object, which so far had been the *essential* moment for sensuous consciousness, becomes now "*the unessential*" (*das Unwesentliche*). The focus changes from the object to the subject and it seems that Hegel sides now with Protagoras: man is the measure of all things.[25] The truth "is in the object as *my* object, or in its being *mine* [*meinen*]; it is because *I* know it" (PG, 86; PS,

25 J. Hyppolite, *Genèse et Structure de la Phénoménologie de l'esprit de Hegel* (Paris: éditions Montaigne, 1946), p. 94; H.S. Harris, *Hegel's Ladder*, vol. 1, p. 218ff.

61). Thus, the appeal to experience is seen from a different angle. When I point to the tree or a house or a stone, etc, and I utter "here," it is the "I" that is the important part in such relationship, "the I is universal" (PG, 87; PS, 62).

Sensuous consciousness oscillates between its own self and the object. It finds out that immediacy has no truth; it is in permanent motion and finds meaning only in its past. As Hegel will later write in the *Philosophy of Mind*, sensation "has to do only with what is individual and contingent, with what is immediately given and present" (ENZ3, 118; PM, 89). The immediately given attains meaning and universality only when rationalized, understood, and interpreted by the cognizing mind. Hegel emphatically juxtaposes the sensuous to the rational, demonstrating the contrast between the particular and the universal. Mocking empiricism in the *Phenomenology*, he writes that even animals deny the sensuous truth of things: "despairing of their reality, and completely assured of their nothingness, they fall-to without ceremony and eat them up" (PG, 91; PS, 65).

To sum up, the hitherto attempts to find truth in empirical reality through particularizations of the type "this," "here," "now," etc., inevitably lead to the universal. One utters the existence (*Dasein*) of external things referring only to particular, individual things. However, when one *speaks* about them, one does not talk anymore about *that particular thing*, but about the universal. In our language, Hegel writes, we usually denote the precise opposite of what we express. We utter "this" as a universal and denote a tree, or a house, that is, something particular.[26] But the particular finds its truth in the universal. One does not see *the* "furniture," but does see and operate with chairs, tables and the like. Nobody has ever seen "the" ideal man, but we do see real men every day. Yet, we have the universal idea of "man" which can

26 The goal of Hegel's attack is to "establish once and for all right at the very beginning the importance of thought and language even to basic perception." R. Solomon, *In the Spirit of Hegel. A Study of G.W.F. Hegel's* Phenomenology of Spirit (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), p. 323. I will discuss the question of the relationship between language and thought in the following sections.

be used to refer to any particular man. As it was known already to Plato, the ideal triangle has never been observed by anybody in experience, although humans operate quite effectively with its empirical counter-samples. Knowledge of the particulars, if it is *knowledge*, "does not precede but presupposes our knowledge of the universals."[27] More accurately, it must presuppose the ability to represent the particular in a universal *ideal form*, and to coordinate one's action in accordance with this contradictory blueprint. As Hegel puts it in the *Philosophy of Mind*, "the contradiction between the *mental* content and sensation consists in the fact that the former is for itself universal, necessary, and objective; sensation, on the other hand, is an isolated particular, contingent, a one-sided subjectivity" (ENZ3, 99; PM, 74).

The truthfulness of the particular or the empirically given has long been challenged in the history of ideas, from Plato's *Theaetetus* through the medieval disputes between Realists and Nominalists and to modern discourses. However, Hegel does not argue for a mere elimination of the sensuous data. *His critique of empiricism intends to show its one-sidedness, rather than counter-propose a rationalistic or universalistic paradigm*, and it is at least inaccurate to say that Hegel offers a clear-cut transcendental argument.[28] At the outset, the transcendental interpretation of his position seems effective for at least two reasons. First, Hegel makes his case backwards, in a circular way. Phenomenological consciousness apprehends experience *qua* experience only after consciousness has been formatted and exists within the element of universality. It seems, therefore, that consciousness somehow imposes its form on the manifold. Second, within Hegel's system of absolute idealism, as well as within every idealism, there exists an inevitable transcendental, or even transcendent, aspect: absolute spirit preexists and mirrors its own self in and through the object. This is why from the very beginning of the *Phenomenology*, Hegel seems to neglect

27 *Ibid.*, p. 337.

28 See esp. C. Taylor "The Opening Arguments of the *Phenomenology*," in A. MacIntyre, ed., *Hegel: a Collection of Critical Essays* (New York: Anchor Books, 1972), pp. 151–77; R. Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism: the Satisfactions of Self-Consciousness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

(*but never rejects*) the other side of cognitive process, namely, that in both ontogenetic and phylogenetic development an entire period of practice and repetition precedes the acquired ability for ideal representation.

The above having been said, Hegel's insight is dialectical and complex. First, contrary to Kant, Hegel maintains there is no universal without the particular, no absolute "beyond" separable from "here," no transcendence separable from immanence (or "empty" thing-in-itself separable from the phenomena), no absolute ("bad") infinity separable from finitude. Second, contrary to Kant, in Hegel there is no set or ahistorical structure of consciousness that might precondition cognition. Third, contrary to Kant, neither historically, nor logically is consciousness *formatted* separately from experience. In this respect, Hegel's esteem for Spinoza's monism is not accidental. This is why, as he will later repeat in the *Philosophy of Mind*, "the content of sensory consciousness is itself *dialectical*" (ENZ3, 208; PM, 161). In Hegel's view, it is "*der Inhalt an sich selbst*" which is dialectical and not a transcendentally enforced form. He appeals to the infinite connectivity of the manifold and its relation to consciousness, and he accepts the manifold as playing an essential formative role in consciousness. Kant's demand for unity between the understanding and sensitivity in defining the manifold (the use of the categories for empirical intuition and cognition of objects of possible experience) has been discussed in the preceding chapters. Hegel, a long-time disciple of Schelling, shares in his demolition of transcendentalism; in effect, he sees Kant's demands as unfulfilled promises, and misses no opportunity to mock the emptiness of his transcendentalism.

The above issue is not confined to Kant's phenomenological approach. In a similar way, one could pose this question with regard to Husserlian phenomenology. Circumventing Frege's charge of psychologism, Husserl pursued a "pure" structure of consciousness, which resulted in an "ontologization of pure mind."[29] However, his concept of *Intentionalität*, his launch of the *Lebenswelt* in

29 T. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, trans. E.B. Ashton (New York: Continuum, 1997), p. 167.

his late works,[30] and his calls to focus on the things themselves indicate that he was troubled with the formality of transcendentalism and aware of the social and historical dimension of knowledge. Phenomenological intentionality is still vulnerable to the sharp criticism of transcendentalism that Hegel had advanced.[31] Consciousness for Hegel is not just intentional,[32] i.e., just *directed toward* the object (which would mean that consciousness is *first* transcendentally established and only *then* directed to the object). Consciousness, because of its practical nature, exists in a concrete unity with its object (what could be called *Dinglichkeit, Gegenständlichkeit des Bewusstseins*), being abstracted *from* it. Such comprehension on behalf of Hegel is, to be historically correct, the elaboration of what Schelling already had set forth when moving away from Fichte.

It is another question that Hegel, driven by the objectives of his system, takes advantage of the fact that every sensuous experience, the "here" is always inevitably expressed as "here." All "heres" in Hegel's text are therefore identical, whereas in reality they are distinct on every occasion. For the philosopher's goal, as we shall soon see, is not to ground the idea in reality, but to establish the metaphysical connection of the one with the other. There is a deception in Hegel's narrative, namely, that he knows in advance what it is that he is looking for in the *Phenomenology*. At the end of the first chapter of that work, it is already a specific object that the Hegelian sense-certainty holds onto: "it is only sense-certainty as a *whole* which stands firm within itself as *immediacy* and by so doing excludes from itself all the opposition which it has hitherto obtained" (PG, 87; PS, 62). Hegel's appeal to reality is thus ambiguous: the *particular* or empirical does possess existence, but also

30 E. Husserl, *Crisis in European Sciences and Transcendental Phenomenology*, trans. D. Carr (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1970).

31 In this respect, it is noteworthy that Husserl knew Hegel mainly from secondary sources, and in his voluminous work he cites Hegel just a few times. See T. Rockmore, *On Hegel's Epistemology and Contemporary Philosophy* (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1996), pp. 146–66.

32 Cf. J. Flay, *Hegel's Quest for Certainty* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1982), pp. 51ff.

has an ever-decreasing significance. The empirical is necessary and unavoidable, and knowledge *must* start from it. At the same time, the empirical is cunningly used in order to justify the universal. The former is only held as the negative side of the latter, *for the sake of the latter.* As the phenomenological adventure unfolds, we shall see that this contrast becomes more evident.

B. *Perception as Humanized Sense*

The deduction of the "universal this" designates the transition to the next stage of the quest for certainty, the acknowledgement of sense data as perception. The two important personages of the narrative are now Consciousness and Perception. Both are essential moments of knowledge, and both are, as we have seen, universals. Consciousness has acknowledged its own universality as the medium that unites singularities given in experience. Those singularities have been maintained in their general form, as a universal object given in perception. Unlike immediate sense-certainty, perception "takes what is present to it as universal." But despite his criticism, Hegel does not give up the primacy of the object. Consciousness continues to focus on the object rather than on its own self, and still expects the truth to stem from the object: "The object is the essence regardless of whether it is perceived or not" (PG, 93: PS, 67).

The acknowledgement of the fact that perception always contains a human dimension of universality is the point at which reflection is formatted as an abstract *concept* of a thing in general. This is the actual place where the understanding (*Verstand*) enters the phenomenological arena, although the understanding is still not "*bei sich*" but relies on perception. Surely, perception is not identical with the understanding, yet it is *mediated* by the understanding; perception is a rationalized sense, and, thus, in-itself it carries the universal. Such an idea was latently transferred from the previous chapter of the *Phenomenology.* Even at the level of sensuous consciousness, human sensitivity is never mere blind sense, but also *human, humanized* sense. For Hegel, "Immediate knowledge is also knowledge of the immediate";[33] and, "in fact, perception is already

33 J. Hyppolite, *Genèse et Structure,* p. 85.

guided (but is unaware of it) by determinations of thought,"[34] by a structure. This is what preconditioned the swing of phenomenological consciousness from the very start of its adventure. The dissimilarity at the level of *sensuous* consciousness was rooted in that the specific nature of knowledge was not reflected upon; hence, knowledge was reduced to a series of passing-by instances. By reasoning retrospectively, then, we can discern the inefficiency of sensuous cognition.

At the level of perception, the object is raised in front of consciousness as a totality, as "*the thing with many properties*" (PG, 94; PS, 67). However, once the process of distinguishing among properties begins, the clash between particularity and universality occurs anew. The properties constitute the otherness of the thing, and the thing functions just as the medium that unites the properties. What is then a thing? It is just a concept, the "*thinghood*" (*Dingheit*) (PG, 95; PS, 69). Every thing has many properties. Hegel uses the example of salt. Salt is a simple "this" or "here," something particular, and at the same time, it is something universal through its various properties: it is white, cubic, tart, and so on. Taken separately, each individual property cannot give us the truth of the thing. Neither can the salt itself taken as One (*Eins*), without its properties. The identification of any one of them (either the thing or its properties) as "this" or "here" had already been proven to be a dead end. Once again, perceiving consciousness clashes with the contradictory nature of cognition, "it includes in itself a truth opposed to itself, it is a contradiction, that of being at once for itself and for something else."[35]

It has already been discussed that the particular and the universal, the one and the many, need to be taken together. Such is the path-breaking novelty of the Hegelian strategy. However, this is not the way perception proceeds, because:

> its criterion of truth is . . . *self-identity*, and its behavior consists in apprehending the object as self-identical. Since at the same time diversity is explicitly there for it [the perceiving consciousness – N.L.], it is

34 J. Hyppolite, *Logic and Existence*, trans. L. Lawlor and A. Sen (New York: SUNY Press), p. 140.

35 J. Hyppolite, *Genèse et Structure*, p. 114.

> a connection of the diverse moments of this apprehension to one another; but if a dissimilarity makes itself felt in the course of this comparison, then this is not an untruth of the object – for it is the self-identical – but an untruth in perceiving it[36] (PG, 97; PS, 90).

The methodological insight here is of crucial importance. Neither perception nor the understanding (gradually entering the scene) are able to recognize the contradictory nature of their adventure, to discern contradiction *qua* contradiction, to accept contradiction as a necessary and unavoidable part of reaching the truth, as an important aspect of knowledge. Having attained universality, perception is thus able to comprehend the thing as a *unity* of aspects; perception grasps the thing as unity of "*many diverse and independent* properties" (PG, 100–1; PS, 73), as a mere conglomerate without internal relatedness. However, what perceiving consciousness accomplishes is to explain the thing as the "also" ("*auch*") which endlessly adds and subtracts in order to describe its object as efficiently as possible. As Hegel comments, salt is white, *also* tart, *also* cubic, *ad infinitum*. Thus, as perception grasps the object inaccurately, consciousness inevitably comes to feel that it deceives itself (as the passage cited above says, "*so ist dies nicht eine Unwahrheit des Gegenstandes, denn er ist das sich selbst Gleiche, sondern des Wahrnehmens*"), and concludes anew that its perception can be only an opinion (*Meinen*) (PG, 98; PS, 71). Consciousness separates its own truth from the truth of the thing. Therefore, it turns out that all properties of the thing are *from consciousness*, from the subject. The circle of doubt about the validity of the object is repeated, and, once again, consciousness feels that it is itself the universal medium (PG, 99; PS, 72).

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36 "… sein Kriterium der Wahrheit ist … die Sichselbstgleichheit, und sein Verhalten als sich selbst gleiches aufzufassen. Indem zugleich das Verschiedene für es ist, ist es ein Beziehen der verschiedenen Momente seines Auffassens aufeinander; wenn sich aber in dieser Vergleichung ein Ungleichheit hervortut, so ist dies nicht eine Unwahrheit des Gegenstandes, denn er ist das sich selbst Gleiche, sondern des Wahrnehmens."

It must be emphasized that the object does not disappear; on the contrary, it retains its independent existence and, for now, its significance. Consciousness maintains that:

> the Thing exhibits itself *for the consciousness apprehending it,* in a specific manner, but is *at the same time,* reflected out of the way in which it presents itself to consciousness and back into itself; in other words, it contains in its own self an opposite truth [to that which it has for the apprehending consciousness] (PG, 101; PS, 74).

This moment is noteworthy as it demonstrates that Hegel still holds onto the primacy of the object. Although he had been heretofore balancing between locating the truth in either consciousness or in the object, at this stage he chooses the object.

The relation between consciousness and object is, as expected, profoundly dialectical. The thing is for itself and for consciousness. The thing is for another only insofar as it is for itself. Moreover, it is not only for consciousness, but for other things, too. In the same way in which properties are related ("independent" and "opposed") to a thing, a thing as One is related to other things. If the thing is perceived as One, its unity with itself is destroyed by *other things, external to it.* For the perceiving consciousness, the other things form the "otherness" of the first thing. Therefore, in relating itself with the other, not only does the thing negate the other, but it also becomes posited as "connected with the other" (*in einer Zusammenhang mit anderem gesetzt* – PG, 103; PS, 75). In other words, thought cannot express something as different or opposed to others unless it also maintains those that are negated. *Omnis determinatio est negatio.* Let us assume that one defines the thing as an absolute negation of all otherness. This statement shows that otherness is negatively *posited.* If the concept of a thing is taken as absolutely negative, that is, absolutely independent from its otherness, from other things, then it must be negatively related to its own self; otherwise the absolute negation would not be absolute. Once consciousness realizes this negativity, the particular thing ceases to be the essential moment; essentiality is transferred to the otherness of that thing, to universality. As Hegel argues, "the negation that is self-related is the suspension of *itself;* in other words, the thing

has its essential being in another thing" (PG, 102; PS, 76). The particular thing does not lose its independent existence, but *for consciousness* a thing can be grasped only in its relationship to others. What is essential aspect is precisely that pulsating movement which leads to the universal, and vice versa.

Nevertheless, perception does not yet comprehend the dialectical nature of its escapade, namely, that in thought, empirical and theoretical, particular and universal, one and many always function in their togetherness. This fundamental, revolutionary and innovative moment is what Hegelian philosophy is on the verge of introducing. For now, however, perception is tormented between the recognition of the one thing as individuality (*Einzelheit*) and the many things as a collection of equal individualities. Perception sees one and the same as being opposed to its own self: "the object is *in one and the same respect the opposite of itself*" (PG, 104; PS, 76). The thing is a totality of contradictory properties, and the world is a totality of contradictory things. As soon as consciousness identifies the universal, it breaks it down into particulars. And as soon as it attains the particulars, these lead back to the universal.

Perceiving consciousness tries to rescue its object, to avoid the *inevitable* contradictions, separate the essential from the unessential, truth from untruth. Yet, when it focuses on one side it loses the other. For it only abstracts – it takes individuality only as opposed to universality, universality only as opposed to individuality, and essence only as opposed to the unessential. Easy to discern, at this point the perceiving consciousness becomes the consciousness of the understanding. For Hegel, it is the whole that constitutes the truth. However, the whole as truth *is not* a whole emptied from its parts or properties. (This would be just One.) It is a whole united with its contradictory parts. Hence, when consciousness tries to separate the essential from the unessential, it reaches the opposite, "proves to be in one and the same respect the opposite of itself," and "is always at its poorest where it fancies itself to be the richest" (PG, 105; PS, 77).

At the level of perception, consciousness attains the universal, an acknowledged, reflected-upon universal. It "no longer merely perceives, but is also conscious of its reflection into itself, and separates this from simple apperception proper (*Auffassung*)" (PG, 99; PS, 72). However, the issue is not yet properly addressed.

Consciousness as perception "has not yet grasped the Concept qua Concept" (hat seinen *Begriff* als *Begriff* nicht erfasst) (PG, 108; PS, 79), and it struggles in its fear of contradictions. The process takes place, Hegel writes, because the abstraction is still that of the object, and not of the perceiving consciousness; consciousness does not yet recognize *itself* in the object. "Consciousness has for its content merely the objective essence and not consciousness as such" (*nur das gegenständliche Wesen, nicht das Bewusstsein als solches zu seinem Inhalte hatte*) (PG, 108; PS, 80). By disclosing this circumstance, Hegel is running ahead of his phenomenological exposition. His confession is of central importance to his intentions: the object becomes inferior in cognition.

C. *The Understanding as Conceptualizing Ability*

Understanding, as the rationalizing ability that realizes concepts *qua* concepts, surpasses the limitations of perception. As an ability of conscious idealization, it thus reaches the "unconditioned universal." In the movement of consciousness in which the thing abolishes itself in other things, and the various things mutually interpenetrate, the understanding reveals an ideal aspect of reality. More precisely, it reveals the *ideally portrayed nature of interacting parts of reality.* For the understanding, "the object is no more immediately given, it is no more the thing of perception, it is the Force or the Law."[37] Force (*Kraft)* is the unconditional universal, an idealized facet of the real world, the motion in which the relationship between things and their multiplicity is reduced to unity or "pure for itself" and vice versa. Force, as Hegel says, constitutes "the substance of these differences" (PG, 110; PS, 82) because force is just an ideality or ideal description of the object. As expected, then, "the realization of force is at the same time the loss of reality" (PG, 115; PS, 86). Nobody has ever witnessed *the laws* that govern natural phenomena. What one always witnesses are not the laws as such, the mind's *ideal* depictions, but their expressions, the *externalizations* of these laws in natural phenomena.

37 J. Hyppolite, *Genèse et Structure,* p. 80.

For Hegel, empirical reality has been superseded by the universality of its portrayal, the universality of the ideal. In addition to recording the difference in Hegel's emphasis (the increasing disappointment in the external world as the source of truth), it must also be said that supersession does not mean one-sided negation. The negation here is dialectical. Force is not fixed or transcendentally defined aspect, for it exists only in the *movement* of self-overcoming and self-externalizing or, as Hegel writes, self-actualizing. It can be conceptually grasped only in this duality.

> The *Concept* (*Begriff*) of force rather preserves itself as the *essence* in its very *actuality;* Force, as *actual,* exists simply and solely in its *expression,* which at the same time is nothing else than a supersession of itself (*Sichselbstaufheben*) (PG, 115: PS, 86).

Therefore, Force is torn into two: itself as such, and itself as externalized, actualized and unified with its object. The play of forces is the means through which things are grasped, as unity of inner ideality and outer expression. Here Hegel depicts the inward lawfulness of the real world, revealed by the understanding, and expressed in an ideal universal form as being "opposed" to appearing reality. Force represents the insight into the inner of things and its conceptual representation. It is so not only because the notion of force is itself an *idea*, but also because any interaction, any relation between things, although representing real relationships, is necessarily expressed in an ideal form. As we will see later, the category is also an ideal, essential determination of things which, as Hegel will later show, amounts to their generic description. Nevertheless, no one sees, for instance, *necessity* besides necessary events and interconnections. This dialectic is key to Hegel's procedure, for it comprises of the fluidity and mobility (*Flüssigkeit* and *Beweglichkeit)* between the universal and the particular, the inner and the outer, the external reality and its conceptual representation. It is at once a natural *and* an ideal dialectic, regardless of how paradoxical this statement may sound.

Returning to Hegel's text, the contrast between the universal and the particular is expressed now as a contrast between the inner and the outer. By means of the play of forces, the understanding looks "*into the true background of things*" (PG, 116; PS, 86). As Plato

had already done in the *Republic*, Hegel calls this world the true, "supersensible" world:

> Within this *inner truth,* as the *absolute universal* which has been purged of the *antithesis* between the universal and the individual and has become the object of the *Understanding,* there now opens up above the *sensuous* world which henceforth is the *true appearance*, a *supersensible* world which henceforth is the *true* world, above the vanishing *present* world there opens a permanent *beyond* (PG, 117; PS, 87).

The world of ordinary experience, the world as we see it, is just *an inverted world*, says Hegel. We reach now a decisive moment which is expressly dialectical, although it rests on obvious metaphysical presuppositions. The object is reconstructed and reflected upon; its inner and outer sites are unveiled. In this scheme, as the philosopher writes, the inner denotes an emptiness, a beyond about which we know nothing. Such a stance is neither the confirmation of agnosticism, nor accidental. Hegel's intention is precisely the opposite. In his view, the inner needs to be rejected, because the beyond can be thought only in relation to the here, and the here *is* within our reach.[38] In the same way, Hegel says, in which absolute light would be as empty as absolute darkness and no one could discern anything therein, absolute beyond is as empty as absolute here. In reverse order, from the here it becomes possible to move all the way up to beyond. The beyond can be understood through the here, and vice versa. As Jean Hyppolite puts it, "for Hegel, therefore, there is no ineffable that would be on this side of

38 The passage is either bypassed by commentators [e.g. Q. Lauer, *A Reading of Hegel's Phenomenology* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1993), pp. 85ff.] or identified, strikingly, without criticism of the Hegelian *quid pro quo*. For example, H.S. Harris (*Hegel's Ladder*, vol. 1, pp. 280ff.) and J. Hyppolite (*Genèse et Structure*, p. 86ff.) interpret these passages in the stream of previous arguments of the ineffectiveness of sensuous cognition as incapable of universality. The latter, Hyppolite argues along with Hegel, is brought in by *λόγος*, whereas the sense is *άλογον*. Yet the real issue is the nature of what is *λογικόν* and its difference from the divine as *λόγος*.

or beyond knowledge, no immediate singularity or transcendence; there is no ontological silence, rather dialectical discourse is a progressive conquest of sense."[39] Therefore,

> the inner … has, however, *come into being:* it *comes from* the world of appearance which has mediated it; in other words, appearance is its essence, and, in fact, its filling. The supersensible is the sensuous and the perceived posited as it is *in truth;* but the *truth* of the sensuous and the perceived is to be *appearance.* The supersensible is therefore *appearance qua appearance* (PG, 118; PS, 89).

There are two distinct levels of assessing this dialectic, which are fused in Hegel's discussion, namely, the concrete understanding of the inner-outer relationships of the object at hand and the ontological claim about the inner in general and the beyond in general. The absolute beyond as *an idea* can be expressed in human thought only in relation to its opposite, namely, as opposed to the absolute here. However, the absolute beyond *as being* cannot be proven only on the basis of its interaction as *idea* with the *idea* of the here. Such a move can be accomplished *only on the basis of the identification of the two: idea is being, and being is idea.* This is an important point for Hegel's philosophical idealism and his identification of finite with infinite reason. The ideal representation of the infinite, and the effective use of it in mind's activity, is not equal to the claim about the actual existence or non-existence of the infinite (for instance, the infinity or finitude of the actual world). Once we have the *idea* of the beyond, then *as idea* it must be related to something else, to a "here." With reference to the dialectical structure of the mind, the inner cannot be *thought* without the outer; it is impossible to think about the finite without distinguishing it from the *idea* of the infinite and vice versa. It would be absurd to think of "formless content" and "contentless form," as he writes. Both opposites must be taken in their togetherness. However, *Hegel capitalizes on these distinctions, on their combination and simultaneous consideration in the human mind, and he methodically turns the logical operation into an ontological metaphysical account.*

39 J. Hyppolite, *Logic and Existence*, pp. 20–1.

Therefore, the discussion here is crucial for the critique of Hegel that I will advance in the current treatise. Hegel's position provides the thread for the justification of philosophical idealism as a metaphysical position and the claim of absolute knowing at the end of the *Phenomenology*. For Hegel's objective, as it will later be revealed, is not simply to examine the potential of human *finite reason* as Kant and Fichte did. Hegel will see finite reason only as instantiation (exemplification) of *infinite reason*, of God, the absolute, the unconditioned, etc. Contrary to Hegel's intention, it must be thus argued once again: the inner of a *thing*, is not identical with the inner *in general*; the ideal construction of finite reason is not identical with its ontologization and *ontological primacy* of that ideal construction. The ideal representation of the infinite is not the same as the existence of the infinite, and the *idea* of the absolute cannot be the same as the absolute itself (as already emphasized by Fichte and even by Schelling).

The dialectical moment is unquestionably the most appealing in Hegel's analysis. For the consciousness of the understanding, the transitions from the particular to the universal are expressed as force. Force is permanently externalized; this is the law of its existence. "This difference, as a universal difference is consequently the *simple element in the play of Force*," and is what is true in the Force. It is the "*law of Force*" which is expressed as "the *stable* image of unstable appearance." Thus, the law of force turns itself into a series of laws, and the supersensible world is just "an inert *realm of laws*" (PG, 120; PS, 90), which is the true territory of the understanding. Such a stabilizing role had been assigned to the understanding also by Fichte. Hegel propels the *fluidity* of appearances. Stabilization is expressed in a series of laws because appearance has no unique way of existence. Appearance manifests itself diversely so that "with every change of circumstance the law has a different actuality" (PG, 121; PS, 91). In other words, the phenomenon reflects only a side, a part of an appearing essence. Hence, every particular law is a part of the picture and therefore untrue. Even the totality of laws, if taken separately, would be untrue, because what is essential is the togetherness, interrelation and movement. Any specific law would be a particular, which for Hegel is sublated by the universal. In this case the universal is "the pure Concept of law" (PG, 121; PS, 92) as distinct from its

concrete expressions.[40] At the same time, the universal is inconceivable without these concrete expressions. It is only in them that the universal exists.

Although this dialectic is attractive, it is difficult to defend it from realistic criticism. Force is also something ideal but has a verifiable equivalent in the real world. The same is valid for the lawfulness that governs a particular real process. But the *concept* of law as such, drawn from particular laws, has no other equivalent than what exists in our minds. The argument here is similar to that of the "absolute beyond." The beyond of a concrete object is not the equivalent to an expression of the beyond as metaphysical category. Similarly, the particular law and the lawfulness of the world as it opens to human cognition are not necessarily an equivalent of an objectively existing *concept* of law as an ontological or metaphysical entity. The specific nature of consciousness is, again, the main device in Hegel's argument, as it had been all the way, from the "this" and "here" at the beginning of the *Phenomenology*. At that level, Hegel's claim could not be rejected for at least two reasons. First, as it has been argued above, ideality is the unavoidable mode of human cognition. Second, the contrast between the particular and the universal, although emphasized, did not have the open ontological implications that it now has. Only now, at the verge of the transition to self-consciousness, the reader realizes what Hegel's objectives are. As Marx once wrote, Hegel is interested "not to discover the truth of empirical existence, but to discover the empirical existence of the truth."[41] Therefore, he "may not measure the Idea by what exists, he must measure what exists in accordance with the Idea."[42] Marx's reversal of Hegel here

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40 Hegel talks about "universal attraction," which commentators often associate with Newtonian gravitation. Similarly, many identify the examples of the play of forces as being associated with scientific discoveries contemporary to Hegel, such as electromagnetism, etc. The methodological point, however, is far more general, namely, the demonstration of the concept as concept, its self-sufficiency, and, eventually, the justification of absolute idealism.

41 K. Marx, *Early Writings*, trans. R. Livingstone and G. Benton (New York: Vintage Books, 1975), p. 98.

42 *Ibid.*, p. 119.

constitutes an important critique, despite the fact that for Hegel, in order for what exists to be measured "in accordance with the idea," the idea must *necessarily* be dispersed into what exists. Only in such a way is Hegel's dialectical scheme complete.

Once again I will contrast Hegel's metaphysical objectives with his complex methodological strategy. In the further analysis of the "inverted world" Hegel portrays a scene governed by motion and change. The "inert realm of laws" that was initially revealed by the understanding turns to its otherness in a process full of contradictions. Although the understanding experiences[43] (*erfährt*) (PG, 126; PS, 95) contradiction *qua* contradiction, it does not *comprehend* it as such, because it "sticks to the inert unity of its object and the movement falls only within the understanding itself, not within the object" (PG, 126; PS, 95). The object likewise is full of contradictions. As the consciousness of the understanding (*das verständige Bewusstsein*) cannot comprehend contradiction and movement when it encounters them, it once again believes that contradiction comes from its own self, *not* from the object. The consciousness of the understanding accomplishes another loop in its movement and proves unable to comprehend how:

> differences arise that are no differences, or that what is *selfsame (Gleichnamige) repels* itself from itself; and similarly, that the differences are only such as are in reality no differences and which cancel themselves; in other words, what is *not selfsame* is *self-attractive* (das *Ungleichwerden des Gleichen* und das *Gleichwerden des Ungleichen*) (PG, 127; PS, 96).

It is worth mentioning that, for Hegel, the real and inverted worlds are eventually reconciled.[44] As he writes, "the North pole

43 A.V. Miller erroneously translates here "*erfährt*" as "learns." As a matter of fact, the understanding becomes acquainted with or *experiences* contradiction, but does not endorse it.

44 This is a great difference from what the fetishism of Adorno's negative dialectics has claimed. To be sure, Adorno is not quite clear on this issue. He partly ascribes negative dialectics to Hegel, and partly admits that he advances such claim against Hegel's own intentions (e.g. *Negative Dialectics*, pp. 120, 156, etc.).

which is the in-itself for the south pole is the north pole actually present in the same magnet" (PG, 130; PS, 98). Hegel's approach is to *combine the opposites in one and the same*; it is about their unity, not a one-sided negation. What he has established is something more fundamental, namely, the comprehension of the object as a *contradictory* whole:

> We have to think pure change, or *think antithesis within the antithesis itself*, or *contradiction*. For in the difference which is an inner difference, the opposite is not merely *one of two* – if it were, it would simple *be*, without being an opposite – but it is the opposite of an opposite, or the other is itself immediately present in it (PG, 131–2; PS, 99).

It is one and the same, which at the beginning is indifferent to itself and relates to itself and therefore doubles itself (*entzweitet sich*) because, as it has already been discussed, self-relatedness is already differentiation that produces otherness. Each of the two opposites, then, is the absolute opposite to the other, and, as absolute opposite, it is the absolute opposite to its own self. As such, it is identical to itself, and being opposed to itself it is:

> not the opposite of an 'other' but only a *pure opposite;* and so each is therefore in its own self the opposite of itself; in other words, it is not an opposite at all, but is purely for itself, a pure, self-identical essence that has no difference in it (PG, 132; PS, 100).

Hegel is persistently dialectical. The one turns itself into two and vice-versa. The whole process consists in two, in unity and difference, in which both sides turn themselves to each other. When difference takes place, the unity is only one side of the equation. The unity is in fact only a moment of the relationship, the other being division. What thereby remains is the movement of self-overcoming. "The different moments of *self-sundering* and of *becoming self-identical* are therefore only this movement of *self-supersession*" (Die Unterschiede von *Entzweiung* und *Sichselbstgleichwerden* sind darum ebenso nur *diese Bewegung des Sich -Aufhebens*) (PG, 133; PS, 100–1). Hegel's transitions are grounded on the dialectical nature of mind and, despite the obscure language, are logical on their own, and plausible. However, the *quid pro quo*

between mind and being is becoming more and more evident as Hegel finally declares his idealism.

III. The Transition to Self-Consciousness and Idealism

We have pursued the balancing movement of phenomenological consciousness recurring again and again in the search for truth: from the object to consciousness, and from consciousness to the object. Finally, consciousness realizes the infinity of the process. It is the understanding that realizes the problem: "In the contrary law, as the inversion of the first law . . . infinity itself becomes the *object* of the understanding" (PG, 134; PS, 101–2). But the understanding fails to cope with this task because it holds the opposites separate and perceives them as fixed moments. Now, by making infinity its object, and by making the difference in the infinity *immediate*, the understanding turns into self-consciousness because it comprehends something new: it accomplishes what it had been unable to do so far, namely, to recognize itself in the object. Self-consciousness comes to recognize that "in the *inner* world of appearance, the Understanding in truth comes to know nothing else but appearance . . .; in fact, the Understanding experiences only *itself*" (PG, 135; PS, 102–3). Self-consciousness unites the opposition in one and the same, "it is a distinguishing of that which contains no difference, or *self-consciousness.* I distinguish myself from myself, and in doing so I am directly aware that what is distinguished from myself is not different [from me]" (PG, 134–5; PS, 102).

As movement which differentiates itself from itself, self-consciousness is the "reflection out of the being of the world of sense and perception, and is essentially the return from otherness" (PG, 138; PS, 105). It thus becomes conscious of its identity: I am I. Hegel admits the Fichtean self, having added a universalized dialectic to its deduction. The self is thus no more an axiomatic postulate, but has been circularly revealed. Although reason (*Vernunft*) is supposed to emerge openly in the next section of the *Phenomenology*, its presence here is already evident. Essentially, self-consciousness is a *rational consciousness (vernünftiges Bewusstsein)*, and it is reason that preconditions the attitude of self-consciousness,

reason as the *κατ'εξοχήν* faculty of comprehending the "unity of unity and difference."

In its logical aspect, the outcome of Hegel's reasoning is remarkable as it points to the mind's ability to comprehend contradiction *qua* contradiction, to simultaneously hold infinitely opposed tendencies in one and the same object. Such an astounding advancement, the core of dialectical logic, is subjected by Hegel to a purely and intentionally idealistic interpretation. For what consists of contradictory tendencies is for Hegel consciousness itself. Self-consciousness, he says, by making itself its object, transcends the distinction between the "being in itself" and "being for another" (PG, 137; PS, 104). *Both moments are located within consciousness.* Such a modification has dramatic consequences in the unfolding of the phenomenological adventure, and these are immediately made known. Once the object is subjectivized, it suddenly becomes a very specific object: another consciousness. As I can see my consciousness as the other, I can also see my consciousness *in the other.* The clash between the particular and the universal acquires at this point a contour in which subject and object are both subjects, are both consciousnesses. Consciousness realizes that all previous moments and phases of knowledge are just moments of its own self.

Robert Pippin has aptly identified the transition to self-consciousness in the *Phenomenology* as the "turning point"[45] which enables Hegel to establish the proof of his idealism. The phenomenological adventure had begun with the primacy of the outer object compared to consciousness. The relation between the two soon became a dialectical balance in which being in itself and being for another were reciprocal: the object was in-itself (as an independent entity) and for another (for consciousness). Similarly, consciousness was in-itself (as perceiving the object) and for another (in recognizing the object as source of knowledge). Consciousness at first revealed a lawfulness in the object and rigidly explained it through the one-sided determinations of the understanding. The understanding encountered contradictions and

45 Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism: the Satisfactions of Self-Consciousness*, p. 143ff.

eventually realized these contradictions as such. Neither the revelation of contradictory "laws," the juxtaposition of these laws with the *notion* of law, nor the mutual movement of both, excluded the possibility of the dialectical movement of the object itself. For some time, Hegel seemed to hold onto this idea. However, in the transition to self-consciousness, Hegel's emphasis crucially changes. As soon as the subject (consciousness) becomes fully aware of its own self, it turns to its own self for knowledge. The subject makes another subject into its object. From that point on, the *Phenomenology* turns to an *introspection* of consciousness, and the philosopher claims now that whatever knowledge there is, it comes from the subject. The latter, by mirroring its own self in the real object, does not get knowledge *from* that real object but *through* the object.

Hegel's narrative now shifts to the desertion of the object, a desertion which is as essential as it is unconvincing. Concurrently, this shift will help Hegel to demonstrate in the following chapters of the *Phenomenology* some of his greatest discoveries, namely, the historical and intersubjective dimension of knowledge, its social mediation, and its practical nature. Hegel will rightfully claim that consciousness develops and actualizes itself in the process of transforming reality; however, is such a claim equal to the claim that the spiritual reality is the only *true* reality?

To be sure, as Pippin argues, "Hegel's position has not turned, even temporarily, toward some metaphysical monism."[46] The external reality maintains its place in Hegel's system. If monism means the denial of the *existence* of nature, then Hegel is not, and cannot, be a monist. Neither was such an ambiguous thinker as Fichte. The key point in Hegel's analysis is that with the transition to self-consciousness, the object, the real world, loses its importance and primacy; it becomes something like a "*nicht seiendes Sein*" in the narration and emerges as a subordinated moment of self-consciousness. Hegel sees thinking *from within* thinking, knowledge from within knowledge.

With the transition to self-consciousness in the *Phenomenology*, the object is *de facto* abandoned for the sake of truth. What one can conclude from Hegel's analysis is the necessary *mediation* of knowledge by

46 *Ibid.*, p. 145.

concepts (as Kant had already pointed out) as well as the intersubjective dimension of their appearance. Regarding the latter, Hegel persuasively argues that knowledge cannot hover above things as something ahistorical and desubjectivized: rather it is the historical cognition of the universal human subject. However, questions are recorded to the extent to which consciousness is not ensuing from reality (which consciousness is supposed to portray) but the *source* of knowledge of reality. It is philosophical idealism that can justify Hegel's claim that self-consciousness enters the "native realm of truth" (*das einheimische Reich der Wahrheit*) (PG, 138; PS, 104). Such a claim is not proven, but rather assumed. The fact that knowledge of the object is always *knowledge* about the object (always expressed in ideal form) leads Hegel to the conclusion that knowledge can be ultimately justified on its own grounds as absolute knowing. The identity of being and thought can be interpreted in only one way, namely in that being is always rationalized in the thought of the finite subject. However, this is not the same as claiming that being *is* thought. Yet, the identification of being and thought will be Hegel's eventual conclusion at the end of the *Phenomenology*, which builds the bridge for the correlation between human finite reason and divine infinite reason.

To the extent that knowledge is addressed as *knowledge*, Hegel's analysis is extremely powerful. One should not forget that the discussed work is a phenomenology *of mind*, and that Hegel continues the tradition of German idealism. Knowledge of the immediate is at the same time *knowledge* about it, a point which Hegel acknowledges, a circle from which mind cannot escape. Fichte had long wrestled with this problem in his *Wissenschaftslehre*, and Schelling admitted in the *System of Transcendental Idealism* that his philosophy "is searching for the principle of knowledge *within knowledge*."[47] Hegel's appeal to history as the arena of the coming to be of knowledge elaborates ideas that were laid out by Fichte and, especially, Schelling. The all-pervasive, transparent conceptual dialectic he attaches to such a movement is dramatically innovative when compared to the other two philosophers.

47 "Das Prinzip des Wissens *innerhalb des Wissens*," in Schelling, STI, 355.

Hegel's objective is not to examine the finite reason of the finite subject alone. To this end, he knows in advance what he is looking for in the *Phenomenology*. Although he does not deliberately postulate any epistemic presuppositions, he cannot avoid playing out already-established philosophical principles in his work. First, Hegel reproduces the conjectures of German idealism, the identity of being and thought that he had endorsed and emphatically expressed in his early writings.[48] In the *Phenomenology*, the former disciple of Schelling does not challenge Schelling's philosophy of identity *per se*, but *the way of reaching it*.

Second, Hegel argues from within the traditional objective of philosophy toward once-and-for-all given, metaphysical, absolute truths. Although Hegel is known for emphatically and innovatively reconsidering the *path* of philosophy, by relating the absolute to its otherness (respectively, God to the world, infinity to finitude), he does not reconsider the traditional *goal* of philosophy, the pursuit of some final piece of truth. He finds the final truth in the identification of being and thought – not merely in the epistemological, cognitive sense (that any knowledge about being is inevitably *knowledge* about it, i.e., expressed in ideal form), but also in the metaphysical sense (as the ultimate description of being). The cognitive in Hegel merges with the metaphysical. As late as in his *Philosophy of Mind*, Hegel will claim that "the esoteric study of God and identity, as of cognitions, and notions, is philosophy itself" (ENZ3, 393; PM, 313). And the *Phenomenology*, as the reader *post festum* reveals, is another attempt at scientific *metaphysics*.

The identity of being and thought was accepted before, not during, the *Phenomenology*, as Hegel was close to Schelling and endorsed Schelling's move beyond Kant and Fichte. The idea of the identity of being and thought is carried through in the *Phenomenology* and affects the phenomenological consciousness, making it a prejudiced, one-sided consciousness. We have seen above that the phenomenological consciousness is from the very beginning suspicious about the object, it never misses a chance to question the object's validity as a source of knowledge, and does

48 For Hegel's earlier attempts of "scientific *metaphysics*" see Kimmerle, *Das Problems der Abgeschlossenheit des Denkens*, esp. pp. 99–161.

so until consciousness achieves its goal. Consciousness becomes introspection (from the end of the chapter on Consciousness and in the chapter on Self-Consciousness), and then it becomes assurance (throughout the rest of the book) that it is itself all reality. Hegel deliberately directs his narrative toward the in-advance-given objective. This is why already in his Introduction, repeating Schelling's position of the *1800 System*, Hegel had declared in a sharp tone: "Consciousness provides its own criterion from within itself, so that the investigation becomes a comparison of consciousness with itself" (PG, 76; PS, 53). Despite his renunciation of any *a priori* yardstick, Hegel propounds his metaphysical position. The *Phenomenology of Spirit* stands to its name as the appearing of *knowledge* and as the phenomenological adventure *of spirit*. But then, Hegel's appeal to the sensuous content of consciousness, the "this," the "here," was an appeal exoteric and formal in nature from the very beginning. The manifold was posited in order to be rejected.

Hegel famously wrote the Preface to the *Phenomenology* only after he had finished the work, for he never wanted to impose a form on a given content but rather to pursue its own self-motion. (Similar to this will be his claim in the *Logic*, namely, that the beginning is the same as the result.) The *Phenomenology* does not proclaim any initial principle or postulate, its circular argumentation instead deduces absolute knowing from inner necessity and thus builds the bridge to the ontology of the *Science of Logic*. In the last page of the *Phenomenology*, Hegel declares that he has achieved "the goal, absolute knowing." To be sure, such a goal was assumed from the beginning[49] and openly confessed in the transition to self-consciousness.

Heidegger is justified in emphasizing that the *Phenomenology* is a fundamental ontology in the literal sense of being as logos, as *οντο-λογία*, and that from the beginning the book

49 We read with Howard Kainz: "Hegel seems to start from a *fait accompli* – his own particular philosophical view of the world – and then describes the currents leading up to this viewpoint after the manner of a literary flashback" See H. P. Kainz, *Hegel's Phenomenology, Part I. Analysis and Commentary.* (Alabama: The University of Alabama Press, 1976), p. 9. Kainz calls this the "plot" of the *Phenomenology*.

moves within the element of absolute knowing.[50] But this does not annihilate the necessity of experience. In accentuating the metaphysical aspect of Hegel's doctrine, the search for the absolute, Heidegger's influential interpretation underplays the circularity of Hegel's argument, which *requires* the breakdown of the absolute in reality *and* the unity between concept and experience. It is true that Hegel posits the latter in order to negate it, for he knows in advance what he is looking for in the *Phenomenology*. But it is also true that Hegel *must* have an empirical start. And this is what Heidegger neglects when he writes: "What Hegel calls "experience" (*Erfahrung*) in the *Phenomenology of Mind* is related neither to the everyday perceivable being, nor to being in general, nor even is "experience," strictly speaking, a way of cognition."[51] Involving the Aristotelian understanding of *εμπειρία* and stressing Kant's *transcendental* concept of pure intuition, Heidegger finds in Hegel an ontological account of experience,[52] which is essentially parallel to the Ontological Argument. But this is only partially correct: Hegel does not simply corroborate metaphysics but *remedies* Kant's inability to demonstrate the unity between concept and intuition. Hegel's idealism is *absolute*, that is, it includes in itself its otherness as the negation of itself, the otherness that absolute idealism has to incorporate, negate, and *only thereby* return to itself.

The real problem is that Hegel promises to *establish* his sought after ontology and metaphysics. He criticizes Schelling: the truth, the absolute or absolute knowledge as (self) cognition of the absolute, is not like a shot from a pistol and should not be postulated from the beginning. Hence, Hegel's beginning is directed toward experience in the conventional sense. Only *post factum*

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50 M. Heidegger, *Hegels Phänomenologie des Geistes* (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1980).

51 "Was Hegel in der '*Phänomenologie des Geistes*' 'Erfahrung' nennt, bezieht weder auf das alltäglich vernehmbare Seiende, noch überhaupt auf Seiendes, noch auch ist die 'Erfahrung' strenggenommen eine Weise des Erkennens." See Martin Heidegger, *Hegel*, in *Gesamtausgabe* 68.Bd., (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1993), pp. 101.

52 *Ibid.*, p. 106ff.

one realizes that the work is dependent on implicit metaphysical assumptions to which a number of scholars point.[53] In order to properly comprehend the work, one has to bear in mind this "shadow" in each step, in spite of the fact that Hegel pledges something different.

Without a doubt, the metaphysical assumptions do not overpower Hegel's innovation. Besides advancing a thorough dialectic, the great idealist also builds up the explanation of the active nature of consciousness and the intersubjective dimension of rationality. Before concluding my discussion of the *Phenomenology*, it is important to address these issues.

A. *Activity and Intersubjectivity*

Self-consciousness is not restricted to the motionless tautology I = I. It is at once unified and divided. The split occurs between itself as consciousness containing the object in itself, and itself as unity. There is a second *self* opposed to the first, the object as subject, and the subject itself. From its inception, self-consciousness is posited as generic, as realizing itself solely through another self. Thus, says Hegel, the self as unity is the essence or essential aspect of self-consciousness. The self, as opposed to itself in another, is the *negative* of the first, the "antithesis of its appearance and its truth."

53 A systematic stress on the "putative presuppositions" and circular nature of the *Phenomenology* is advanced in J. Flay, *Hegel's Quest for Certainty* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1982). Flay shows how every stage in the narrative necessarily collapses into the next, until the final stage, which presupposes the absolute. Similar, although unconventionally named, is the interpretation of P. Simpson according to which Hegel proceeds both inductively and transcendentally: consciousness must recognize experience as its source before experiencing, but only at the end we realize that there was an all-inclusive absolute *coming to be* what it is and at the same time always *being* what it is. Only at the end, does absolute knowledge deductively organize what has been inductively gathered, and even at this point, deductive calculation can be only to the degree to which it is combined with induction. See P. Simpson, *Hegel's Transcendental Induction* (New York, SUNY Press, 1998); See also Habermas' criticism in *Knowledge and Human Interests*, pp. 11ff.

Existing in such a dialectic, self-consciousness "exhibits itself as the movement in which this antithesis is removed, and the identity of itself with itself becomes explicit for it" (PG, 139; PS, 105).

The object of self-consciousness is at the same time a subject: it is a *life*. The life of consciousness is in its being one with its object and is grasped in its dynamic and generic aspect. Hegel here has in mind not any particular life, but the *mere idea of life as a universal phenomenon*. Yet he has shown already that no universal is beyond the particular. The universal exists as a split in and through the particular, and vice-versa: the essence of the individual shape (individual consciousness) is "universal life." Thus he comes to write that "the simple substance of Life is the splitting-up of itself into shapes and at the same time the dissolution of these existent differences" (PG, 142; PS, 108). And this is how Hegel arrives at the notion of individuality. Individuality, then, and every individuality, is united with universality as "the simple genus which, in the movement of Life itself, does not *exist for itself*" (PG, 143; PS, 108–9). The individual is a one-sided (abstract) universal which finds "*its satisfaction only in another self-consciousness*" (PG, 144; PS, 110). This is what preconditions the process of the realization of consciousness, its desire, and struggle for recognition beginning with the master-slave dialectic.

The nature of the transition to self-consciousness explains and necessitates the transition from subjectivity to intersubjectivity. Self-consciousness comes about with the realization that consciousness belongs to the genus, to the universal. This occurs *before* Hegel turns in the *Phenomenology* to examine the forms of *Sittlichkeit*. To be conscious of myself, to have consciousness, means to be able to separate myself from myself, to reflect. Reflection makes it possible for the subject to see itself somehow "from the side" or, conversely, understand another subject as the same. This is a specific prerogative of humans. As Otto Pöggeler charmingly puts it, "if horses knew that they were horses, if their genus were for itself, they would also have self-consciousness."[54] Thus, intersubjectivity is established in the *Phenomenology ex definitio* and only then traced

54 O. Pöggeler, *Hegels Idee einer Phänomenologie des Geistes*, 2. durchg. u. erw. Aufl. (München: Karl Alber Verlag, 1983), pp. 244–5.

as a historical relationship among its constituents, among subjects. More than that, the evolution of such a relationship, the enigmatic Hegelian "cunning of reason," possesses its own autonomy and is not equal to a mere sum or average of individual pursuits, but frequently unfolds contrary to them. In this respect, *Hegel's novelty in comparison to the preceding tradition is ground-breaking.* The philosopher's approach sheds new light on the Kantian subject, the problematic nature of which was evident in all Kantian *Critiques*, and was also palpable in Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre.*

Whereas for Fichte the individual I was juxtaposed to another I, Hegel puts the subject on an intersubjective plane by interpreting it from the standpoint of the *genetic* commonness between the I and the We. In the later editions of the *Wissenschaftslehre* Fichte had also come to postulate an *absolute* I that was subsequently split into the I and the not-I. It could be therefore inferred that Fichte's absolute I anticipates Hegel's We. But for a number of reasons this does not equate the two. First, Hegel's derivation is not axiomatic but circular – its concepts are not postulated in advance but revealed in the process. Second, Hegel incorporates into his theory the epistemological import of experience, which Fichte had wholly rejected. Finally, and most importantly, Hegel does not simply juxtapose the particular to another particular. *Deliberately so*, he changes the Fichtean symmetrical relationship between two particulars to an asymmetrical but still reciprocal one, the relationship between the particular and the universal.[55] He does not simply relate one subject to another subject, but these two to the extent that both are

55 For a good further discussion in English, see R. R. Williams, *Recognition: Fichte and Hegel on the Other* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992). Williams focuses primarily on practical philosophy and recognition. Epistemologically speaking, intersubjectivity is not the same as recognition, the latter being a social and historical, thus, an empirical question. But Williams is precise when he holds that the "eidetics" of intersubjectivity (Ch. 7) explain the "empirics" of recognition (Ch. 8 and ff). That is, one has to *first* settle the asymmetry between the particular and the universal (which is not a mere juxtaposition between the I and the not-I), and *then* proceed to the "empirical side." All this takes places in the context of the circularity of Hegel's argument.

exemplifications of the universal so that *the relationship of any particular self to another particular self is conceivable only from within, and through, the relationship between the particular self to the universal self.*

Neither is thinkable without the other. As Hegel later beautifully expresses it in the *Philosophy of Mind*:

> the totality of relations in which the individual human soul finds itself, constitutes its actual livingness and subjectivity and accordingly has grown together with it just as firmly as, to use a simile, the leaves grow with the tree; the leaves though distinct from the tree, yet belong to it so essentially that the tree dies if it is repeatedly stripped from them (ENZ3, 120; PM, 91).

The bond between the self and its surroundings is a central cognitive (epistemological) issue that is connected to the formation of rationality, and the emphasis on this issue is important for my interpretation in the current treatise. In the phenomenological narrative, the individual mind is grasped as internally related to, and formatted by, the objective forms of already existing culture. Once Hegel construes the rationality of the individual and rationality of humanity as having a parallel framework, it becomes possible philosophically to assess the formation of mind from a new angle, beyond the assessment of individual *ψυχή*. One cannot comprehend rationality if one addresses it as only existing in the head of the individual, and as only externally related to others. Contrary to this, "as comprehension of the nature of spirit, which informs not only the intellectual and practical life of the individual but of the whole of humanity as well, the philosophy of spirit must be seen as a much broader discipline than the philosophy of soul."[56] Thought for Hegel is not only an isolated subjective potency of the individual, but also an intersubjective social phenomenon. As he aims at "showing how the psychology of individual humans embodies the defining structure of spirit,"[57] the only way of distinguishing egos intrinsic to his system is to relate them to the universal ego as

56 W. deVries, *Hegel's Theory of Mental Activity* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), pp. 25–6.

57 *Ibid.*, pp. 27, 104ff., 177ff.

its moments. It is the comprehension of the I as We that makes it possible to do away with the problem of psychologism in logic that troubled philosophy almost a century after Hegel – and to trace the *ex definitio* intersubjective nature of spirit, its objective character in relation to any new individual and any new generation. This is what permits Hegel to throw new light on the nature of the ideal products of the material subject and assess the contradictory life of thought which he later gives an account of in the *Science of Logic*.

Once Hegel correlates the I with the self-determining system of pure thought, any differentiation between the subjective and the objective also presupposes their identification, for it is expressed as a relationship between the particular and the universal. The idealist Hegel, therefore, identifies not the subject as thinking, but thinking as a subject. For him, objective and subjective thought are in reality one and the same. That is, individual consciousness, or any *quantity* of individuals, does not possess *truth* on its own, but finds truth only insofar as it is related to universal consciousness. Individual consciousness finds its truth in the *universality* of consciousness. It is the idea, or ideal consciousness, that contains individual consciousnesses. The particular is connected not to another particular but to the universal or *via* the universal, the absolute subject.

The above shows another facet of Hegel's discovery. Hegel sees intersubjectivity as the vehicle to overcome finite subjectivity, it is the result of the search he had begun in his early years.[58] Thus, when he glances into the nature of the intersubjective realm, Hegel interprets the subjective as a mere "exemplification" and instance of infinite subjectivity, the outer shell of the metaphysical in the physical and historical.[59]

At the same time, for Hegel the metaphysical motive is subordinated to his *dialectical* striving. Hegel's absolute is grasped as the negation of the finite, but not as a mere infinite, mere

58 See K. Düsing, *Das Problem der Subjektivität in Hegels Logik*, p. 50ff.

59 Hegel takes the Kantian unity of apperception and "gives it a twist which Kant would have received with horror." See C. Taylor, *Hegel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), p. 297; See also H.S. Harris, *Hegel's Ladder*, I. p. 462; R. Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism*, pp. 25ff.

transcendent beyond. The absolute is a beyond which is a beyond *only* insofar as it is a here. The absolute, thus, cannot be grasped positively on either side of Hegel's system. But if the absolute is exposed only in relation to its opposite, then Hegel's philosophy is not only one of absolute theological subjectivity but also one of absolute intersubjectivity as the true dimension in which the relativized absolute exists. The "dismembered" absolute subjectivity has no other existential dimension but that of finite subjectivity. At this point, there seems to appear a gap in Hegel's narrative. This discrepancy was recently emphasized by Vittorio Hösle, who charges Hegel with the failure to elaborate the role of intersubjective (subject-subject) relationships, although those relationships are implicit in all parts of his system.[60] The charge is also applicable to Hegel's transition to intersubjectivity in the *Phenomenology*. Hösle thus points out that intersubjectivity is empirically impossible to ground.[61]

The mutual dependency of the particular and the universal has a distinct import, and Hegel's transition to intersubjectivity is not merely empirical. As I tried to show above, Hegel attempts this transition only along with the establishment of the principle of idealism, and on the sole basis of idealism. The relationships between subjects in the *Phenomenology* are thus integrated into the logic of culture and are traced as historical with respect to the *universal* subject. Now, the universal dissipates into parts, but this does not mean that there is no "gravity" for the parts on behalf of the universal. At the same time, as established at the heights of philosophical abstraction alone, intersubjectivity is positioned within an absolute structure in which intersubjectivity finds its truth. The transition to intersubjectivity is therefore a transition *from within*, and only as such it can justify itself.

The real issue, of course, is how to demonstrate the above transition from without thought. Such an enterprise would mean a resolute appeal to the natural ontogenetic and phylogenetic history of consciousness. For several reasons, Hegel could not have advanced his argument in such a way. First of all, the scientific apparatus of that time at best could offer only

60 V. Hösle, *Hegels System*, pp. 257, 263ff. etc.
61 *Ibid.*, pp. 368–9.

indirect evidence (if any) for Hegel's insights. The *Philosophy of Mind* (more than half of which is devoted to the natural background of consciousness) is a proof thereof. Second, one should not underestimate the intellectual surroundings and the role of the spiritual beginning therein. The portrayal of the mind as a mere natural historical phenomenon could be only imagined in the social and intellectual scene of the recent historical past. To explain the mind philosophically from natural and social processes without relating it to the divine constituted an intellectual crime (which entails the danger of social isolation), and in many occasions, a legal crime (which entails physical punishment). Abelard, Bruno, and Spinoza are well-known examples of such condemnation. Even if with the Renaissance the function of philosophy as a handmaiden of theology came to an end, and even if since Descartes the immediate role of the church was put aside, the central place of God in philosophical discourse was far from being disregarded.[62] And this is applicable even after Kant who, characteristically, had been criticized from both the left and from the right. Likewise, Fichte's attempt to deduce knowledge from the subject without making direct and explicit religious concessions, his infamous involvement in the *Atheism Debate* and his academic fate thereafter, also serve to epitomize this problematic. Hegel's philosophy was certainly not the result of an intellectual compromise, but was initiated by and grounded on certain intellectual pursuits of his time, and within this hermeneutical framework it must be examined. Thus, Hegel comes to claim:

62 It is characteristic that about eighty percent of Reihnold's *Letters on the Kantian Philosophy*, arguably the most influential book ever written on Kant, deals with the connection between religion and morality (See K.L. Reinhold, *Letters on the Kantian Philosophy*, ed. Karl Ameriks, trans. James Hebbeler (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), esp. the first six letters). In the writings of Jacobi, another hugely influential figure in the post-Kantian discourse, the problematic of God is present in literally every discussion. It is widely argued that the insights of Jabobi have influenced not only Schelling, but also Hegel. Finally, one should not forget the role of theology studies in the philosophical education of Hegel.

> Opposed to this [Hegel's –N.L.] speculative interpretation of the opposition between mind and matter is materialism which represents Thought as resulting from matter, derives the simplicity of thought from what is manifold. The explanations given in materialistic writings … are unsatisfactory to the extreme (ENZ3, 49; PM, 34).

Last but not least, Hegel's philosophical accomplishment is connected to the metaphysical pursuit of philosophy that, despite Kant's devastating criticism, Schelling revived.[63] It was Schelling who had first demanded that spirit was understood as emerging *from* nature. However, the identification of nature and culture as the source of thought and, the connection of thought with human activity, was not enough to satisfy Schelling's and Hegel's endeavors. In contrast, they both used this explanation as the first (and negative) part of their narrative. Hegel, for example, having demonstrated the dialectical nature of consciousness, might have stopped and acknowledged that the object is this *and* that, *and* that, etc; that finite consciousness is able to dialectically identify its object as an infinite unity of all aspects. However, in realizing the infinity of this process, Hegel, so he thought, found what he wanted, namely, the spiritual principle in general. For him the task was always metaphysical; it was the search for absolute truth.

Far from advocating a naturalistic understanding of consciousness (an understanding which was, to a certain extent, already overcome by Fichte), my criticism here is it is not that of Feuerbach's restoration of the *intuitively given* nature, but rather close to Marx's interpretation of objective nature as *socialized* nature.[64] The validity of Hegel's criticism of the naturalistic interpretation of mind is beyond question. To the contemplative and representational model, Hegel profoundly juxtaposes both the categorical independence of mind from reality as well as its practical nature.

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63 See Habermas' sharp expression: "The assumptions of the philosophy of identity kept Hegel from reaping the real harvest of his critique of Kant." J. Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, p. 43.

64 On this, see esp. A. Schmidt, *Der Begriff der Natur in der Lehre von Karl Marx*, überarb. u. erg. Neuausg. (Frankfurt a. M.: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1971).

In his view, "self-consciousness … is not [merely] being, but absolute activity." It takes possession of the object "whose independence is, so to speak, only pretended, satisfies itself by consuming it and, since it is self-end [*Selbstzweck*], maintains itself in this process. In this sense, the object must perish" (ENZ3, 217; PM, 168). Hegel's predictive methodological insights are far-reaching. However, the philosopher seeks the other end, not the origin of thought in real activity but rather its specific nature, its ideality. Thus, instead of real human activity, Hegel ends up discussing "absolute activity" as revealing the positive meaning of the beyond, and comes to "declare mind to be the likeness of God, the divinity of man" (ENZ3, 233; PM, 182). This happens despite his acknowledgement that the movement toward the beyond *must* be necessitated from within the here. Hegel sees reality as reality, but sees it upside down. All those monuments of social culture that human history has brought forth, all manifestations of the power of human spirit, are not seen as the result of *human* spirit, as its *own* formation though its activity, but rather as constitutive parts of the revelation of the absolute in history, as the manifestation of the beyond in the here.

> The human mind is, of course, able to rise above the Knowing which is occupied exclusively with sensibly present particulars; but the *absolute* elevation over them only takes place in the philosophical cognition of the Eternal (*in dem begreifenden Erkennen des Ewigen)*, for the Eternal, unlike the particular of sense, is not affected by the coming-to-be and passing-away (ENZ3, 147; PM, 112).

Human spirit is thus the externalization of infinite spirit, and both are portrayed as self-generated. Thus, the real, sensuous-practical activity of humanity as a prehistory of thought is for the absolute idealist the result of a spiritual *presupposition*, and it confirms such a presupposition. Hegel seems to suggest a scheme that is made up of a closed-within-itself thought and a passive outer world. "Thought is thus transformed into the only active and creative 'force,' and the external world into its field of application."[65] It is as if, paradoxically,

65 E.V. Ilyenkov, *Dialectical Logic*, p. 237.

the real humanity and real object (nature) have fallen out of Hegel's focus, despite their *necessary* function in his system.

Demising transcendentalism, Hegel calls attention to the natural and historical origin of mind and also underlines (and indeed deifies) its intersubjective nature and the specificity of mind's ideal constructions. Almost two centuries after the publication of the *Phenomenology*, metaphysics may seem in many philosophical schools a thing of the past. But Hegel's epistemological insights into the active nature of consciousness and his view that knowledge of the self presupposes the genus (and is actualized therein) are backed by the findings of modern science.

B. *Excursus in Genetic Epistemology: Piaget, Vygotsky and Hegel on Thought, Language and Culture*

Two leading schools of twentieth-century psychology, the genetic epistemologies of Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky, have demonstrated through their experiments both the historical formation of cognitive processes in their unity of ontogenesis and phylogenesis,[66] as well as the *differentia specifica* of mind as active, creative, and possessing a specific plasticity. As a detailed treatment of those original thinkers would require a separate essay, I will offer only a general outline of their arguments. *The seemingly extraneous material in this section is instrumental in my discussion for at least three reasons. First, for confirming Hegel's view on mind; second, for demonstrating the missing in Hegel transition from the manifold to mind* (the transition "from without" that I argued for in the previous section); *third, for demonstrating the difference between thought and language, which is important for the criticism of formal logic that will be advanced in the following sections.*

For Piaget's genetic epistemology, rational abilities emerge as the historical evolution of higher psychological abilities. The mental is

66 For a good comparison of the two see A. Tryphon and J. Vonèche, eds., *Piaget-Vygotsky: The Social Genesis of Thought*, (Sussex: Psychology Press, 1996). For a rare and extremely interesting assessment of Piaget's work from the angle I argue for in this section is provided in J. Habermas, *Zur Rekonstruktion des Historischen Materialismus* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1976), 1.Teil. *Philosophische Perspektiven.*

viewed as an advanced capacity of biological systems to adapt to their environment and to regain "equilibrium." A violation of the latter results in the so-called disequilibria and simultaneously creates the need for further action in order to regain stability. Piaget thus claims that he employs equilibrium as "synonymous with activity."[67]

The genetic relationship between the logical and the psychological is suggested as a process in which the former evolves from, but is not exhausted by the latter.[68] Acknowledging the correspondence between "the progress made in logical and rational organization of knowledge and the corresponding formative psychological progresses," Piaget defines the cognitive process as essentially dynamic and emphasizes that knowledge cannot be a passive copy of reality.[69] However, it is impossible to trace the beginning of such a process: in order to make a copy, one has to know the model that is being copied. The origin of the model itself becomes the issue, but any evaluation of the model would require a second-level model, and so on to infinity. The argument is based on a circle, which Piaget acknowledges.

It is doubtful whether Piaget was aware of the proximity between his and Fichte's circles.[70] Nevertheless, their difference is equally substantial. The starting point for Piaget is not an individual piece of knowledge. To the contrary, intellectual abilities are mapped out by genetic epistemology as logical structures. Logical structures evolve in the process of human activity, and in their study

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67 J. Piaget, *Six Psychological Studies*, trans. A. Tenzer (New York: Random House, 1967), p. 151.

68 Piaget's proximity to transcendental philosophy is well acknowledged in existing bibliography. A recent example is R. Kitchener, *Piaget's Theory of Knowledge. Genetic Epistemology and Scientific Reason*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986. Comparing Piaget to Kant (p. 75–88) and Hegel (pp. 88–94), Kitchener argues that Piaget is an "evolutionary transcendentalist" and that "even though Piaget is critical of certain kinds of dialectical thinking he can accurately be said to have a dialectical epistemology" (p. 88).

69 J. Piaget, *Genetic Epistemology*, trans. E. Duckworth (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), p. 13, 15.

70 See my discussion of Fichte in Chapter 2.

there is never an absolute beginning. Every structure has a genesis, and every genesis has a structure. No structure is entirely innate or acquired, and "genesis and structure are indissociable."[71] Accordingly, the first step of knowledge, the early stage of sensorimotor schemata of the child's adaptation, is already a "reflex cycle" which incorporates new elements and produces generalized totalities.[72] Once a structure is formatted, it is immediately included into the cognitive process and becomes instrumental in any further knowledge. As structures differ from each other depending on their origins and development, conceptual intelligence takes on a more elaborate and different structure than sensorimotor intelligence. In this way, both abstract and scientific thought are addressed by Piaget as processes that are related to their corresponding psychological grounds. Genetic epistemology thus attempts to connect the formation of the ideal to the real, without identifying the one with the other.

Demonstrated in terms of logic, relativity and dialectic, Piaget's epistemology explains the phylogenesis of mind by focusing on its ontogenesis. On the ontogenetical level, his experiments reveal stunning parallels between mathematical basic structures as they are organized by mathematicians and structures in the child's thinking.[73] Those experiments illustrate the formation of quantity, quality, identity, space, time, simultaneity, and other categories, as developing in the process of a child's activity. With regard to time and simultaneity, Piaget often mentions that it was Einstein who suggested to him the experimental investigation of their formation.[74]

Acknowledging and sharing many of Piaget's ideas, Vygotsky advanced a number of distinct hypotheses. Rather than seeing intellectual growth as an adaptive process of a particular biological system, Vygotsky approaches growth as coming *from within* the social setting and interprets the meaning of individual activity as based on social bonds. Vygotsky's charge is that Piaget both isolates

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71 J. Piaget, *Six Psychological Studies*, p. 150.
72 *Ibid.*, p. 10ff.
73 J. Piaget, *Genetic Epistemology*, p. 26ff.
74 *Ibid.*, pp. 7, 69; *Six Psychological Studies*, p. 84.

the individual from his or her environment, and views the external world as merely interiorized. Piaget's concept of development holds thought and social world on the one side, and the individual world on the other, with each having its own logic and objectives. Vygotsky emphatically fuses both aspects in one, and argues that not only the development of intellectual abilities but also the socialization of the child must be traced as a structure. Taking the isolated individual and seeing the external world as being interiorized would mean to reverse the real situation, he maintains. For interiorization is not socialization but the contrary: interiorization amounts to individualization. Mental development is individuation as *separation* from the whole. It comes from within the social world, which the individual joins as a biological being. The methodological point here is of fundamental importance and of philosophical significance, for individuation is addressed *through* socialization.[75] To put it in terms of Hegel's *Phenomenology*, the particular and the universal are taken in their togetherness, the individual self is genetically connected to the universal self, and the I is genetically connected to the We.

Vygotsky extremely rarely mentions Hegel in his works, but their methodological proximity (which can be explained by Vygotsky's affiliation with Marxism) is obvious. Departing from these ideas, Vygotsky experimentally traces the child's egocentrism as already signifying the process of individualization rather than a pre-socialized phase. Such an interpretation becomes possible only when the child is seen as an inherently social being that grows to be increasingly individualized, rather than an individual being that becomes increasingly socialized. "The actual

75 See Habermas's discussion of G.H. Mead in the essay "Individuierung durch Vergesellschaftung," in J. Habermas, *Nachmetaphysisches Denken* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1988), p. 187–241. Noteworthy, although Habermas' previous research on the relation between ontogenesis and phylogenesis focused on J. Piaget (See *Zur Rekonstruktion des Historischen Materialismus*, part I), he now seems to come closer to Vygotsky. On the same issue see also E. Ilyenkov's essay "Shto Zhe Takoye Lychnost?" ["What is Personality?"], in *Filosofia y Kultura* [*Philosophy and Culture*] (Moskva: Politizdat, 1990), pp 387–414.

movement in the development of the child's thinking occurs not from the individual to some state of socialization, but from the social to the individual."[76] Therefore, Vygotsky argues, the early egocentric language of the child which supposedly dies away with the development of socialization, is not so much egocentric but rather an unarticulated expression of individuation which, instead of disappearing, mediates the transition from external to internal speech. The completion of the egocentric phase signifies the appearance of thinking in the true sense of the term.

Vygotsky elaborates a multilevel spiral scheme of intellectual development. Whereas Piaget stresses the biologically supported, universal stages of development, Vygotsky underscores the interaction between the *changing* social conditions and the biological ground, the two milestones of child development, the interweaving of the biological and the social.[77] As the cultural background differs from one historical moment to the other, from generation to generation, so does individual development. Vygotsky thus adds an inherent plasticity to the whole process of development of rationality.

His research involves experimentation not only with children, but also with developed animal species as pre-human samplings of the intellect. Such strategy aims at overcoming the exoteric approach of Piaget's structuralism. It places its emphasis on the moment of the *historically changing* unity of ontogenetic and phylogenetic development and the uniqueness of the social level of organization in relation to the biological. This approach aims at grasping precisely the movement itself, the moment of transition from one structure to the other. Thus "historical analysis becomes the key to the logical understanding of concepts"[78] and knowledge is not seen as ready-made but rather as historically developing and changing on both phylogenetic and ontogenetic levels. The

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76 L.S. Vygotsky, *Thinking and Speech*, in *The Collected Works of L.S. Vygotsky*, vol. 1, trans. N. Minnick (New York and London: Plenum Press, 1987), p. 76; Cf. L.S. Vygotsky, *Mind in Society: The Development of Higher Psychological Processes*, ed by M. Cole et al. (Cambridge (Mass.): Harvard University Press, 1978), p. 27.

77 L.S. Vygotsky, *Mind and Society*, p. 46.

78 L.S. Vygotsky, *Thinking and Speech*, p. 147.

historically created world of human culture as the objective background against which any new growth is achieved becomes the center of Vygotsky's developmental scheme. This is the world that every particular individual (ontogenetically) and every historical generation (phylogenetically) encounters as objectively existing. Once again to be mentioned here, the methodological proximity with Hegel is easily discernable. Vygotsky, who is not a philosopher, adds now concrete experimental data that shows thought emerging from natural reality and culture.

The role of speech in intellectual development is as fundamental for Vygotsky as it is for Piaget. Comparing the intellectual level of developed animal species and child development, Vygotsky concludes that thought and speech have phylogenetically different roots, develop independently of one another, and are not in a constant relationship. Vygotsky generally identifies a pre-speech phase in the phylogenetic development and (though he does admit a lack of ample factual data) analyzes the ontogenesis of thought in detail. He identifies first the different roots of speech and thought, then a "pre-intellectual" phase in the development of speech, and finally a crossing between speech and thought that begins at the age of two. At this phase, thinking becomes verbal and speech becomes intellectual. The results of such interweaving are dramatic. Speech acquisition proves to be crucial as providing "the foundation for an entirely new form of behavior, one that is an essential characteristic of man."[79] A comparison of the development of inner speech and intellect as it occurs in the animal world and the earliest stages of childhood:

> demonstrates that the former does not represent a simple continuation of the latter. The very type of development changes … from a biological form of development to a socio-historical. … It is therefore characterized by a whole series of *features and laws* that do not apply to natural thinking and speech.[80]

79 *Ibid.*, p. 110; also, *Mind in Society*, p. 24.
80 L.S. Vygotsky, *Thinking and Speech*, p. 120.

After establishing the specificity of socially mediated intellectual development, Vygotsky proceeds to investigate its actual formation by splitting it into four fundamental stages (the formation of syncretic, complex, pre-concepts, and concepts) and several sub-stages. In brief, thought begins from comparative images of a chaotic sensuously perceived whole, moves to complex generalizations, achieves first-level abstractions (pre-concepts), and separates conceptual operations from experience. In Vygotsky's narrative, mind comes forward as inherently dialectical.

> The child's thought emerges first in a fused, unpartitioned whole. It is for precisely this reason that it must be expressed in speech as a single world. It is as though the child selects the verbal garment to fit his thought. To the extent that the child's thought is partitioned and comes to be constructed of separate parts, his speech moves from parts to a partitioned whole. Correspondingly, to the extent that the child moves in his speech from parts to the partitioned whole of the sentence, he can move in his thought from an unpartitioned whole to parts.[81]

Further, the creation of complex generalizations is determined by the existing adult speech and its stable, well-defined meanings. The child does *not* choose the meaning of the word. It is given to him through verbal interaction with adults. One and the same thing may enter into complex relationships with other things and receive complex meanings. "If we consider the history of our own speech, it becomes apparent that the complexive thinking is what underlies its development."[82] The surprising feature, however, is that complexive thinking does not constitute an entirely superseded phase, but a phase reproduced in ordinary life. Thus, "the concepts that we find in our living speech are not concepts in the true sense of the word. They are actually general representations of things. There is no doubt, however, that these representations are a transitional stage between complexes or pseudo-concepts and true concepts."[83] This

81 *Ibid.*, p. 251.
82 *Ibid.*, p. 151, 154.
83 *Ibid.*, p. 155.

striking ambivalence is based on the observation that not only children, but also adults:

> often fail to think in concepts. The adult's thinking is often carried out at the level of complexes, and sometimes sinks to levels that are even more primitive. Applied in the domain of life experience, even the concepts of the adults and adolescents frequently fail to rise higher than the level of the pseudo-concept. They may possess all the features of the concept from the perspective of formal logic, but for dialectical logic they are nothing more than general representations, nothing more than complexes.[84]

The true uniqueness of the mind lies elsewhere. Mind develops an ability to consider concepts not in direct relation to experience, concepts as concepts themselves. Even more striking is *that the consideration of concepts does not exhaust thought*. Vygotsky underscores mind's creativity:

> The brain does not act as a photographic apparatus producing a collective photograph. Thinking does not operate through the simple combination of these photographs. On the contrary, the processes of concrete and active thinking arise long before the formation of concepts. Concepts themselves are the product of the long and complex process that constitutes the development of the child's thinking.[85]

From the formation of "ordinary" concepts, Vygotsky proceeds to investigate the formation of scientific concepts in early adolescence and presents us with another striking discovery. His experiments show that "the development of scientific concepts begins in the domain of conscious awareness and volition. It grows downward into the domain of the concrete, of the domain of personal experience. In contrast, the development of spontaneous concepts begins in the domain of the concrete and empirical. It moves toward the higher characteristics of concepts, toward conscious

84 *Ibid.*, p. 160.
85 *Ibid.*, p. 164.

awareness and volition."[86] Thus, the more developed the mind, the more essential are creativity and freedom as its characteristics.

Certainly, the individual mind represents a complex structure, and it is a part of the general social structure, the collective reason of mankind. Vygotsky's research raises the importance of systematic treatment:

> The concept does not emerge in the child's mind like a pea in a sack. Concepts do not lie alongside one another or on top of one another with no connections or relationships. If this were the case, thought operations requiring the co-relation of concepts would be impossible, as would the child's worldview and the entire complex life of his thought. Moreover, without well-defined relationships to other concepts, the concept's existence would be impossible. In contrast to what is taught by formal logic, the essence of the concept or generalization lies not in the impoverishment, but in the enrichment of the reality that it represents, in the enrichment of what is given in immediate sensuous perception and contemplation. However, this enrichment of the immediate perception of reality by generalization can only occur if complex connections, dependencies, and relationships are established between the objects that are represented in concepts and the rest of reality. By its very nature, each concept presupposes the presence of a certain system of concepts. Outside such a system, it cannot exist.[87]

Thus, concepts and categories are historically formatted and originate in the manifold. But they are not just generalizations from the manifold, they represent multilevel operations that reflect an evolution from one structure to the other, toward an increasing internal differentiation. Consciousness is an articulated developing whole that gains growing complexity and independence from the outside world. Each stage of thought is a structure of generalization that bears specific types of relationships between general and specific concepts. Each subsequent stage reforms the previous, and the lower operation is viewed as a special case

86 *Ibid.*, p. 220; *Mind in Society*, p. 37.
87 *Ibid.*, p. 224.

of the higher. Generalizations become "generalizations of generalizations" with internal connections, and the relationships mediate the concept's connection to the object. Abstraction and generalization of thoughts principally differ from abstraction and generalization of things. Thought becomes productive, flexible, dialectical. It becomes systemic and every concept depends on the system of other meanings. Thus, "supra-empirical relationships"[88] become possible.

It is not my objective to indulge into specific considerations of Vygotsky's doctrine. The thinker himself admits that the evolving complexity of thought structures revealed by his experiments remains yet to be examined in more detail. What is important for the current treatise is that thought formation is seen as genetic and traced experimentally. Mind is not addressed as something given from above, ready-made and unchangeable. Its specific nature is underscored – Vygotsky shows how ontogenesis is conditioned by the phylogenesis. The already-existing world of previous intellectual development, as it is externalized in culture and language, forms an objective background for the formation of individual consciousness. Moreover, both in its ontogenetic and phylogenetic aspects, the intellectual world has a life of its own; it obeys its own laws and represents neither a direct abstraction from immediate experience, nor a mere adjustment to the environment. The intellectual world does originate in experience: ultimately it is this reality that is reproduced in thought. However, the reproduction is not an unswerving reflection. It is experimentally shown that *thought does not represent a passive adjustment to the outside environment, but a cognitive incursion into it. Thought comes out of the environment, yet is not reducible to an immediate relationship toward it. In this interactive process, mind acquires its own dynamic and specific differences. In other words, thought is something that differs from mere representation, not in degree but in kind.* In Vygotsky's arresting portrayal, the formation of thought evolves from the social whole to the individual, to creativity and free willing.

There remains another important issue to be discussed in more detail, that of the relation of thought to language. It has already

88 *Ibid.*, p. 234.

been mentioned that the invention of language denotes a turning point in intellectual evolution. "The use of signs leads humans to a specific structure of behavior that breaks away from biological development and creates new forms of a culturally-based psychological process."[89] The relationships between thought and word are themselves a product of historical development. From primitive forms of generalization that are expressed in speech-thought (thought expressed in speech), the connection is transferred to higher and more complex forms.

Both Piaget and Vygotsky agree that language, being a central tool and being in constant interaction with thought, does not exhaust thought. In Piaget's view, language, along with imitation and mental imagery, represents only a particular form of a symbolic function that extends the power of formal operations of thought without exhausting them. It is thus a "necessary but not sufficient condition for the construction of logical operations."[90] The development of thought does not stop with the invention of language despite the fact that language is the most important tool of thought. The discernable explanation of this stance is related to the active nature of mind. Piaget states that "human thinking cannot be explained by language alone, but has roots in the general coordination of actions."[91] Although thought and language are intimately related and the appearance of the language sharply enhances thought, they are not identical to one another.

On this question, Vygotsky has a similar approach and beautifully expresses it: "Thought is not expressed in the word, but it is completed in the word."[92] Language can neither grasp the richness of life situations nor exhaust the infinite connections of concepts that thought may convey. Therefore, ultimately explicit methods of articulation (e.g., the pursuit of a "perfect language") can never substitute for the entire spectrum of the life of the mind. One and the same thing may be expressed in different words, or one word may express different meanings; the conceptual operations evolve

89 L.S. Vygotsky, *Mind in Society*, p. 40.
90 J. Piaget, *Six Psychological Studies*, p. 98.
91 J. Piaget, *Genetic Epistemology*, 19, 41–59.
92 L.S. Vygotsky, *Thinking and Speech*, p. 250.

in mediated relationships that make their combinations infinite. Thought has its own dynamic and social functions, which ascribe and transcribe meanings. This is why thought can pass itself through *without* verbalization. It is the writer, the master of the word as the tool of thought, who grasps this interplay with depth and precision. Among others, Vygotsky recalls a famous passage from Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* in which the heroes communicate by writing initials of the words instead of the entire words and can perfectly understand each other. A passage from Dostoyevsky's *Dnevnik Pisatelia* (*A Writer's Diary*) is even more impressive:

> Once on Sunday, near evening, we happened to walk alongside a crowd of six drunken workers for fifteen paces. I suddenly became convinced that it is possible to express all thought and sensation – even a whole chain of reasoning – through a single short noun. One member of the group sharply and energetically pronounced a word, expressing his own scornful rejection of something they had been talking about. In response, another repeated this same noun using an entirely different tone and sense, expressing serious doubt about the validity of the first speaker's rejection. A third, suddenly becoming indignant with the first, sharply and heatedly entered into the conversation. He shouted the same noun at the first but with a sense that was abusive and reproachful. Here the second reentered, indignant with the third (i.e., the offender); he cautioned him: "Why did you fly in like that? We were talking calmly and in you come swearing." He expressed this thought using the same venerable word, the name of a single object. His speech differed from the others only in that he raised his hand and took the third speaker by the shoulder. Suddenly a fourth speaker – the youngest who previously had been silent – discovered a solution to the difficulty that had initially given rise to the argument. He raised his hand in delight and shouted … "Eureka", … "I found it, I found it!" No, not "Eureka", nor, "I found it": he merely repeated that same noun, only the one word. But he said it with delight, a visage of ecstasy. This seemed too strong. The sixth, a sullen individual and the oldest in the group, did not like it. He quickly snubbed the naïve delight of the younger. He turned to him sullenly repeated that same noun – a noun forbidden to women – with a nasal base tone. His meaning was clear and precise: "What are you screaming about?" Not saying another

> word, then, they repeated their pet word six times in sequence and understood each other completely. I was a witness.[93]

As there can be no reduction of thought to language, there can also be no juxtaposition of the two. To the contrary, the word as device of thought creates immense possibilities for intellectual development, and both thought and word are key to understanding consciousness. As Vygotsky puts it, "consciousness is reflected in the word like the sun is reflected in a droplet of water. The word is a microcosm of consciousness, related to consciousness like a lining cell is related to an organism, like an atom is related to the cosmos. The meaningful word is a microcosm of human consciousness."[94]

It is now time to resume the discussion of genetic epistemology. Neither Piaget nor Vygotsky based their inquiries and insights on the development of cognition on Hegel and German idealism, although the striking parallel is in no need of extensive commentary. The results of their research, especially those of Vygotsky's, seem to confirm the view of German idealism, and Hegel's view in particular. The Kantian *sensus communis*, it turns out, is more than a reasonable hypothesis. It is rather an absolute precondition of thinking. The I can neither emerge nor be understood otherwise than as the Hegelian We, which denotes the intersubjective dimension and the formative role of social background. One can easily trace the parallels between what the obscure Kantian language calls "analogies," "anticipations of perception," "schemata" and "categories" on the one hand, and Vygotsky's and Piaget's unfolding multilevel concepts on the other. Elaborating on the insights of previous German idealism, Hegel addresses the categories of mind by adding to them an inherent fluidity that is lacking in the Kantian analysis. On this as well, the absolute idealist is backed by genetic epistemology. Mind, meta-conceptual and reflective thinking possesses a historically determined nature, plasticity, and independence that sharply distinguishes it from its frequent portrayal as a rigid, direct representation of experience.

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93 Quoted from: L.S. Vygotsky, *Thinking and Speech*, p. 271.
94 *Ibid.*, p. 285.

The discussion of genetic epistemology raises a new issue, which is essential for my later argument about Hegel's notorious dialectical logic. If thought is understood solely as a higher psychological function of the human *individual*, as something like "inner speech," then it is inevitably traced in the externalizations of this speech, that is, in language. Given the richness, complexity, and multilevel use of language, there follows its identification with thinking, the pursuit of "innate grammar structures"[95] or similar explanations. The identification between language and thought is characteristic of almost the entire spectrum of contemporary philosophical schools. Twentieth-century analytic philosophy and philosophy of language

95 Chomsky's extremely interesting, widely-spread, but equivocal doctrine calls for some commentary. Plausibly distancing himself from empirical models of mind, Chomsky claims that these models "can be refuted by careful study of language" [*Language and Mind* (New York, Hartcourt Brace, 1972), p. 172, further quoted as L&M]. He advocates a "universal philosophical grammar" that is based on semantically understood language structures as independent from words, symbols and signs. Advanced as an elaboration of Cartesian rationalism, Chomsky 's philosophical linguistic theory is based "on the theory of mind from which it arose" [*Cartesian Linguistics* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), p. 73, further quoted as CL], on "creative mental acts" (CL, 27; L&M, 11), and, therefore, grammar structures "reflect certain fundamental properties of the mind" (CL, 59). The implication, then, is that the sought after universal language is resultant of the mind's activity, that the activity of thought is primary, and language is an invented device. This approach, however, is characterized by Chomsky as "typically romantic" (CL, 21, 30). Yet he does endorse Humboldt's idea that "the language provides finite means but infinite possibilities of expression constrained only by rules of concept formation and sentence formation, these being in part particular idiosyncratic but in part universal, a common human endowment" (CL, 29). Later on, employing a more explicit transcendentalist language, Chomsky talks about an invariant conceptual system that is prior to any experience, but meant to be applied to experience [*Language and Problems of Knowledge* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1988), pp. 32ff., 61, further quoted as LPK] and he defines the components of such system as "categories of lexical items" (LPK, 67ff). Does this imply the identification of thought with language? Still not! Chomsky often speaks about language as used for "expression of thought" (LPK, 38), implying that these are two separate things.

thinkers such as Carnap, Wittgenstein, etc., are known for their emphasis on this issue. Heidegger and Gadamer, each in peculiar concord with the Anglo-American tradition, have also emphasized the idea of thought as always grounded on linguistically articulated horizons.[96] Regarding Hegel, recent commentators often address his philosophy from such an angle:[97] Derrida insists on the centrality of Hegel's semiotics,[98] and even the former president of the

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Chomsky is even more unclear on a number of other questions. Are the so-called "rules" or "categories" innate or are they formatted? Are they the result of historical activity or inexplicable ahistorical satellites of mind? Admitting the natural origin of mind and its specificity, Chomsky adds that it results from "unknown physical mechanisms" (LPK, 7) and that "the process by which the human mind has achieved its present complexity and its particular form of innate organization are a total mystery" (L&M, 97). At the same time, as a rationalist, he admits that even if the biological mechanisms are discovered, they do not exhaust the mind (LPK, 8). Despite that, Chomsky still attaches the human rational capacity to a biological clock: "The principles that determine the nature of mental representations and the operations that apply to them form a central part of our biologically determined nature" and are not acquired by learning or training. (LPK, 131, 161).

In sum, that language plays an essential and multilevel role in human thinking is beyond question. In question is the fetishism that reduces the one to the other or drags linguistic research as a substitute of philosophical research. It is by no means the case that "the study of universal grammar is the study of the nature of human intellectual capacities" (L&M, 27; LPK, 1ff.) Even if the "innate grammar structures" do exist, they are powerless for *explaining* thought. Chomsky seems to agree with that.

96 We read with Gadamer: "Here lies Hegel's great relevance for today: the speculative statement is not so much a statement as it is language." H.G. Gadamer, *Hegel's Dialectic. Five Hermeneutical Studies,* trans. C.P. Smith (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), p. 95.

97 Cf. M. Forster's parallel between Hegel and Wittgenstein, in M. Forster, *Hegel's Idea of a Phenomenology of Spirit,* pp. 227ff; D. Lamb, *Hegel – from Foundation to System* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1980), esp. Ch. IV.

98 J. Derrida, "The Pit and the Pyramid: Introduction to Hegel's Semiotics," in *Margins of Philosophy,* trans. A. Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), pp. 69–108.

Hegel Society of America reads Hegel as the forerunner of the so-called "linguistic turn."[99]

It must be conceded that Hegel's position on the relationship between thought and language is often ambiguous. In his discussion of language as the carrier of the universal at the beginning of *Phenomenology*, the philosopher creates the impression that language and thought are identical. Further, many of Hegel's obscure and broadly criticized transitions in the *Science of Logic* are masked through language manipulation. Indeed, language is seen by the philosopher as primary, as the manifestation of thought "in the first instance" (WL1, 20; SL, 31) and as its "perfect expression" (*der Vollkommener[er] Ausdruck*) (ENZ3, 192; PM, 147). Thus, language comes to play a mediating role in various parts of Hegelian philosophy.[100]

The above having been said, Hegel's ambiguities neither exhaust nor explain his stance.[101] By grasping thought as *intersubjective historical activity*, he reassesses the relationship between thought and language. In Hegel's view, language is the work of thought, a "product of intelligence for manifesting its ideas" (ENZ3, 271; PM, 214), not the other

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99 See J. McCumber, *The Company of Words: Hegel, Language, and Systematic Philosophy* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1983).

100 For an extensive, textually oriented discussion, see T. Badammer, *Hegels Deutung der Sprache. Interpretationen zu Hegels Äußerungen über die Sprache* (Hamburg: Meiner, 1969); for furhter discussion in English see D. Cook, *Language in the Philosophy of Hegel* (The Hague: Mouton, 1973); J. O'Neill Surber, ed, *Hegel and Language* (New York: SUNY Press, 2006). For an attempt to ground the *necessity* of a Hegelian philosophy of language, see J. Vernon, *Hegel's Philosophy of Language* (New York: Continuum, 2007).

101 In more detail for such a view, see esp. V. Hösle, *Hegels System*, pp. 396–411; E.V. Ilyenkov, "Gegel y Germeneftika," ["Hegel and Hermeneutics"] in *Voprosi Filosofii*, 1974, N. 8, pp. 66–78; E.V. Ilyenkov, *Filosofia y Kultura*, esp. 270–5; M. Rosen, *Hegel's Dialectic and its Criticism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), pp. 122–42. The specific difference between language and thought is acknowledged also in analytical readings of Hegel. See E. Bencivenga, *Hegel's Dialectical Logic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 6–42. Jean-Luc Nancy expresses the problem sharply: "To penetrate

way around. Thought does not depend on language, but language depends on thought, for "it is not language itself which is 'objective' but rather spiritual contents are therein 'objectified' and receive in such way form (*Gestalt*)."[102] Words do constitute the "externality of thought" (ENZ3, 280; PM, 221), but are not the sole means of objectification of thought. They represent only one way of thought's manifestation among the other diverse ways of humanity's versatile activity. It is thus inaccurate to reduce thought to language. Drawn by his idealistic insistence, Hegel does admit that *εν αρχή ήν ο Λόγος*, but he would undoubtedly agree with Goethe's (raised earlier than Marx's) insight: *εν αρχή ήν η πράξις*. For *Λόγος* is no *Λόγος* without its practical actualization, and if there is an act, Hegel says in the *Phenomenology*, the word will be created for it.

Hegel is also ambiguous because of his idealistic strategy. His idealism closes thought in itself and leads him to connect language to the top and bottom of thought, to see real activity only as mediation. Driven by his metaphysical assumptions, he interprets his pioneering finding in a capsized way so that "language precedes the thought of which it is nevertheless the expression."[103] The self-enclosed thought must see the relationship between itself and

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negativity demands 'another language' than the language of representation. The latter is the language of separation: the language of concepts in their fixity, of propositions and their copulas; it is the language of signification. This language is quite simply language itself, and there are no others – or there are only many of them. To speak the other language – that of thought – is not to speak a mysterious extra language. But it is above all not to enter the ineffable. It is to *think*: to say within language what language does not say … Thought is not language: it is beyond it, beyond the exteriority of the relation between word and thing. But at the same time it also is language: it works like a language … as it articulates things in the play of their differences." Jean-Luc Nancy, *Hegel: The Restlessness of the Negative*, trans. J. Smith and S. Miller (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2002), pp. 34–35.

102 T. Badammer, *op.cit.*, p. 239.

103 J. Hyppolite, *Logic and Existence*, p. 31, 43. To be noted that Hyppolite's position on the relation between thought and language is as ambiguous and complex as Hegel's position, which Hyppolite splendidly illuminates.

real praxis from the standpoint of its outcome, not its genesis. Although Hegel is not against this genesis, he sees it as the birth not only of human spirit but also the world spirit, and the latter is interpreted as the manifestation of the absolute in nature.

In sum, activity precedes language,[104] and so does thought. Both onto- and phylogenetically, thought appears well before language acquisition. Once formatted, language mediates the activity and unwraps the potential of thought by becoming its medium;[105] language opens immense new possibilities for thought's development and operational complexity, but is not one and the same as thought.

Hegel's separation of thought from language has far-reaching consequences. It makes the historical relativity of rational standards discernable; it makes possible to see them evolving as specific symbolizations of diverse human activity, as historically restricted and subject to sublation. In other words, Hegel's approach makes the advance of dialectical logic possible.

Finally, the political consequences of this are not without significance. If thought were identified with language, would not such identification evolve as one between thought and nation? This issue has had tragic political consequences, consequences that became all too well-known in the twentieth century.

C. *Reason and the Category Formation in the* Phenomenology

Having examined the extent and justification of Hegel's appeal to reality, and having attempted to put knowledge on firm, natural, and historical formatting ground, we can now complete the account of the *Phenomenology*. In repeated spirals, the *Phenomenology* traces rationality in a unified stream which merges individual development with the development of human history and the history of ideas. Hegel unveils the specificity of the social,

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104 The idea that activity precedes language may well be ascribed to Fichte. See for instance, J. Vernon, *Hegel's Philosophy of Language*, p. 9.

105 For a good discussion see A. Nuzzo, "The Language of Hegel's Speculative Philosophy" in J. Surber, *Hegel and Language*, pp. 75–91, esp. pp. 76–79.

the realm of intellectual and cultural achievement of humanity, which constitutes the objective background for the development of individual consciousness. In this context, individuality is equally universality, fused with the norms, habits, and customs of a given era, finding its truth only within that historical shape. The same applies to rationality. Hegel underscores the fact that the rational can neither appear nor be explained by appealing to a separate individual. Instead of being localized in the individual, thought can be understood as a historical *collective* phenomenon. Hegel identifies thought with reason. First, reason is traced as an intersubjective faculty. It becomes possible to trace its evolution as an immanent critique of the historical forms of consciousness, morality, art, religion, and philosophy. Similarly, reason is traced as an autonomous faculty, as the "lawgiver," and nature is traced as the passive field of reason's application. Finally, reason is seen as a world substance that Hegel eventually identifies with the absolute. In cognizing reason, so Hegel thinks, it is possible to cognize God. Once reason becomes certain that it is all reality, it becomes the Spirit, a substance that "alienates itself from itself," returning to itself at the same time (3:549; PS:457). Such understanding is based on Hegel's earlier metaphysical assumptions that were transplanted from his early years into the *Phenomenology*.[106]

Explicit in the process of transition from consciousness to self-consciousness, Hegel's assumptions remain unconcealed throughout the rest of the *Phenomenology*. They are fused with the philosopher's groundbreaking insights into the dialectic of rationality. Reason sees "the thing as its self, and itself self as a thing" (PG, 263; PS, 211). But, this dialectic is at once seen "from within" reason. The real world as such is secondary for it has already been identified as the otherness *of reason*. In the activity of reason, the object is the *necessary* negative, and at the same time, the necessary *negative*. On the first occasion, the object is a *conditio sine qua non* of the actualization of reason. On the second occasion, the

106 It is therefore a clear misreading to claim that "Reason in the *Phenomenology* is nearer to Kant's and Fichte's reason, rather than to Hegel's own later understanding of it." See N.V. Motroshilova, *Put' Gegelia k Nauke Logiki*, p. 186.

object is not that from which reason historically evolves but that on which reason exercises its power. The dependence of reason on the object is narrowed, and the object is the mere arena of its free activity.

The "Observing Reason" of the *Phenomenology* reaches over to an outer reality in order to know the truth (*Die Vernunft geht darauf die Wahrheit zu wissen*) (PG, 186; PS, 145). This step amounts to a transition of reason "from its own concept to an *external* reality" (PG, 182; PS, 143). Hegel advances an astute critique of non-reflective science. At the same time, this is reason's transition *from its own concept* to an external reality. Hegel here "stands on his head": thought for him does not find the category in external reality, but it is itself the category, and it only reaches out to find itself in externality. Reason has "a universal *interest* in the world, because it is certain of its presence in the world, or that the world present to it is rational. It seeks its 'other' knowing that therein it possesses nothing else but itself: it seeks only its own infinitude" (PG, 186; PS, 146). On the one hand, practice is not illusory, but real historical practice. On the other hand that practice is formal and exoteric because reason has already been predefined as the truth.

This said, Hegel's dialectic becomes all-encompassing. Reason does not simply reach out from its own essence, but its essence is torn apart in that reaching out, and exists therein. Thus, Hegel finds it possible to combine the externality of the object in relation to reason, with the dialectic of the object itself.

If we look at Hegel's approach to consciousness from the standpoint of real, historical people, plurality and individuality make up a pulsating unity within their consciousness. The point had been explicitly made already by Fichte. Yet, for Fichte, thought was closed within the individual self and made inexplicable. In Hegel, the dialectic expands to the intersubjective, and at the same time is expressed in mystical form.

> The pure category points to the *species*, which pass over on to the negative category or individuality; this latter, however, points back to them. It is itself pure consciousness which is aware in each of them of being always this clear unity with itself, but a unity which equally is referred to an 'other', which in being, has vanished, and in vanishing also comes into being again (PG, 183; PS, 143).

Reason is the faculty of the categorical grasp of reality. Through the categories, reason seizes the "pure essentiality of things" and, what is more important, the categories are seen as their genus (*Gattung*) (PG, 182; PS, 143). That is, categories express the object "in its purity," untainted from immediate accidentality. It is possible to reach such a stance once consciousness becomes capable of seeing the object as a simultaneous unity and diversity, as one and many, as divisible and interrelated. The allusion here is to an epistemic organic totality that reveals the whole and its parts as internally connected. Hegel's claim is penetrating, yet advanced in an inverted form. Human reason does not portray *the object* in thought, but thought *through* the object. Reason finds its *own* essentiality in the object, for reason is already "the certainty of consciousness that it is all reality" (PG, 179, 181; PS, 140, 142).

It is also noteworthy that after the categories are constructed, Hegel writes that we may "no longer speak of *things* at all" (PG, 183; PS, 143). This is not to say that the object does not "eternally" transport the category. Reason is not illusory, but immanent in the object. However, for Hegel, reason stems, or emanates from its *own* essence. Spinoza is combined with Neoplatonism in the same metaphysical stream of thought that Schelling had advanced a few years earlier. But, for Hegel, there is no rest in the circle: reason's essence is to emanate, and thus to exist in the object.

With the dialectic universalized and all-penetrating, Hegel is more interested in the reality of truth than the truth of reality. He is interested in the truth of reality insofar as it is a stage toward *the Truth*. Therefore, the lawfulness in the object is real, and the object possesses its own finality, which is different from the formal finality of the *Critique of Judgment*. At the same time, this is not *true* lawfulness. "To the observing consciousness, the *truth of the law* is found in *experience*, in the same way that sensuous being is [an object] for consciousness; is not in and for itself. But if the law does not have its truth in the Concept (*Begriff*), it is a contingency, not a necessity, not, in fact a law" (PG, 192; PS, 151). The law found in experience, the real law, is not but a step toward *the Law*, the pure determination that Hegel aspires to reach. The universal is understood in the sense of "universality of reason," and the particular is just "instance." Therefore,

> the organism shows itself to be a being that *preserves* itself, that *returns* and *has returned* into itself. But this observing consciousness does not recognize in this being the Notion of End [*Zweckbegriff*] or that the Notion of End exists there and in the form of Thing, and elsewhere in some higher intelligence [*in einem Verstande*]. It makes a distinction between the Notion of End and being-for-itself and self-preservation, a distinction which is none (PG, 200–1; PS, 158).

Hegel is notorious for being the champion of totality, yet his totality is not a totality that exists separately from its parts. That is, lawfulness as the universal and the thing as the particular both exist; they are both necessary, and neither is valid without the other. The universal exists solely in the particulars; the particulars have their being as "exemplifications" of the universal, and, at the same time, as untrue. The object *is*, but is not itself the true, the universal. Of course, Hegel overemphasizes the universal because the universal is the spiritual that he wants to uphold. Yet, it would be a mistake to claim that the spiritual exists above and beyond the realm of its actualization, its otherness. Hegel stands absolutely and resolutely for totality, and at the same time, he stands absolutely and resolutely for ultimate partition.

In the organic nature, such a dialectic cannot be attained. Thus, the *Phenomenology* turns to directly address "the actualization of reason through itself" (*Die Verwirklichung des vernünftigen durch sich selbst*). It instantiates the identity of being and thought as ethical substance, in which the realm of nature is entirely abandoned. The spiral movements of knowledge are reproduced at a higher level with the same methodological substrate that has been traced so far.

The issue of knowledge in the *Phenomenology* becomes, from now on, openly and ultimately associated with social history. To be sure, the shadow of Parmenides, Anaxagoras, and several others could be discerned already at the beginning of the work.[107]

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107 The already-mentioned commentary of Harris, as well as the commentary of Kojève [A. Kojève, *Introduction à la lecture de Hegel* (Paris: Gallimard, 1947)] each present enormous sources for these kinds of parallels.

However, with this current transition[108] the work becomes primarily a socio-historical narration, with a substantial portion devoted to historical events rather than to philosophical schools. And if philosophical schools can be discerned in the background, this speaks only of the historicity of cognition, to which even philosophy must obey.

What remains to be discussed is the final breakdown of the subject-object distinction in the *Phenomenology*. The collapse is formally confessed only at the very end of the book, although the real distinction had collapsed long before. As I argued in the previous sections, the real distinction was superseded with the transition to self-consciousness. The inner correlation of the I and the We, one of Hegel's most innovative discoveries, made it possible to switch the discussion of knowledge to consciousness alone.

> Whereas in the phenomenology of Spirit each moment is the difference of knowledge and Truth, and is the movement in which that difference is cancelled, Science on the other hand does not contain this difference and the canceling of it. On the contrary, since the moment has the form of the Concept (*Begriff*), it unites the objective form of Truth and the knowing Self in an immediate unity. The moment does not appear at this movement of passing back and forth ... on the contrary, its pure shape, freed from its appearance in consciousness, the pure Notion and its onward movement depends solely on its pure *determinateness* (PG, 589; PS, 491).

108 The turn to ethical substance as the essence of self-consciousness is also central in the structuring of the *Phenomenology*. As Charles Taylor writes, "in a sense the *PhG* can be thought of as having two parts, whose frontier lies here. In the first we are dealing with form of individual consciousness, even if we deal with men in interaction, as in the dialectic of master and slave ... But in the chapters which follow, on Spirit and Religion, we are taking spirit as a supra-personal subject ...", (C. Taylor, *Hegel*, p. 167). H. Harris (*Hegel's Ladder*, vol. 1, pp. 616ff.) also sees the most important transition of the *Phenomenology* in the turn to *Geist* and the rest of the narrative as a story of opposition within Reason. Lukács sees this transition as the second of the three big spirals of the work (G. Lukács, *The Young Hegel*, pp. 466ff.).

In other words, in the above passage Hegel admits the deceptive nature of the *Phenomenology*. Although the "moment" *does* have the form of the Concept, this issue, Hegel says, does not come into sight in the actualizing process ("the movement") but is conceived at the end, that is, only circularly. Moreover, at this point Hegel builds the bridge to the pure determinations of the *Science of Logic*. Now the distinctions collapse and the "onward movement" depends only on pure determinations.[109] Hegel's own intellectual movement toward the *Science of Logic* ironically coincides with this description.

At the same time, Spirit is self-annihilating, and the realm of its application is its otherness, reality, and history. "The whole religious story of a contingent sequence of partly mythical and partly historical events is the 'spiritual substance' that has to be recollected in the *Phenomenology*. Thus the *Phenomenology* presupposes Nature; and by implication a Science of Nature, as the simple objectivity of the Concept, must be possible. But Hegel is not here concerned with that science; and he is not directly saying anything about it. What matters is that without Nature, there cannot be 'experience;' and hence there cannot be the Science of Experience."[110] It is a circle that returns to itself, and returns to itself only insofar as it is in its otherness. Hegel's dialectical insistence tears the absolute apart and annihilates it.[111] This annihilation is what Schelling had resolutely

109 "The truth of the I is pure knowing. Thus, at the end of the *Phenomenology's* final chapter on 'absolute knowing' stands the idea of a philosophical science whose *moments* are no longer determinate forms of consciousness, but rather determinate concepts. In its initial form such science must be the science of logic." H.G. Gadamer, *Hegel's Dialectic*, p. 77.

110 H. Harris, *Hegel's Ladder*, vol. II, p. 746.

111 For a good recent discussion of this moment see A. Nuzzo, "The truth of *Absolutes Wissen* in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*" in Alfred Denker and Michael Vater, eds, *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit: New Critical Essays* (Amherst: Humanities Books, 2003), pp. 265–93. Nuzzo claims that Hegel's position amounts to a sublation of the ontological-metaphysical notion of the absolute, and that the only absolute that remains is the method of presentation (*Darstellung*) of knowledge that has been completed in the otherness of its absoluteness. So the last paragraph of the *Phenomenology* only signifies the end of the idea of "absolute method."

refused to do, despite some temporary ambiguity in the *Weltalter*. For Hegel, absolute spirit is at the same time absolute otherness: even God collapses under the burden of the dialectic. This is what makes the *Science of Logic* so intricate. *Logic* is not simply pure thought but also thought that *must* be united with the manifold. At the same time, it is a circularly grasped pure structure, and as such it *must* precede the manifold. There is no either/or.

CHAPTER FOUR

FROM METAPHYSICS TO EPISTEMOLOGY II: FROM LOGIC TO REALITY

I. The Idea of an Epistemological Reading of Hegel's *Logic*

A. *The* Logic *as a Continuation of the* Phenomenology

Let me begin with a brief recapitulation of what I have established so far. I have traced the development of the argumentation in the opening chapters of the *Phenomenology* and examined Hegel's transition from sensuous to absolute knowing. I have argued against such a transition, claimed that it can be necessitated only from within knowledge itself, and that absolute knowing can only be presupposed. The transition to self-consciousness turns out to be the crux of Hegel's analysis, the thrust of his idealism and dialectic. In using dialectic to justify idealism, Hegel perfects dialectic. Although his interest in the concrete unity between the empirical realm and thought is mediated by his metaphysical objectives, Hegel does gain insight into the historical and dialectical nature of thought.

Hegel transcends the individual-psychological understanding of thought and puts it from the very start on the track of intersubjectivity, seeing it as a historical activity that is amalgamated in all the forms of culture and civilization. It is in order to explain this claim that I have involved the genetic epistemologies of Piaget and Vygotsky which, although indirectly, clarify what is at stake in articulating a realistic interpretation of Hegel, and one that stands firmly based on the natural foundations of knowledge. It must also be emphasized that Hegel's "idealistic" approach does away with methodological reductionism and proves to be more discerning than contemporary forms of positivistic realism. In Hegel, mind has its own life and specificity; it is not reduced, even indirectly, to the intellectual life of a separately-taken Robinsonian individual or to neuro-physiological processes in the brain. For "it is not the 'structure,' the morphology of brain that appears in external function, but the reverse: the function formats for

itself an organ capable of completing it."[1] If there is a secret of the mind, it would be located in the collective activity of humankind. The social universe in which each individual enters in its ontogenetic development stands against this individual as an objectified whole of human culture and intellectual achievement. This whole itself historically evolves along with the evolution of the individual parts. Humans bring into being the social whole, and in turn, the social whole is the presupposition of humans. In a similar vein, humans create their history, and history is the presupposition of humans. Neither side can be reduced to the other and neither can be understood without the other. Comprehending the uniqueness of the social realm means comprehending the specific historical and logical development of human rationality.

Departing from the above, we can now proceed to examine the epistemological import of Hegel's *Science of Logic*. It is undeniable that Hegel was concerned with questions of knowledge early in his career[2] and remained interested in them even in his mature years, with the *Phenomenology* and *Philosophy of Mind* as proof thereof. Moreover, although it is absolute *knowing* that crowns his system, Hegel came to be perceived by later scholarship as a thinker who brought modernity's epistemological endeavors to an end, for he demonstrated the historical horizons and social limitations of knowledge. This is not the same as saying that reflection on the scope and aims of knowledge has been made impossible. For instance, if one consents that Hegel refuted the *traditional* contemplative epistemology[3] or that he refuted its formalism,[4] these positions do not

1 E.V. Ilyenkov, *Filosofia y Kultura* [*Philosophy and Culture*], p. 114.

2 For a defense of Hegel's epistemology with emphasis on the philosopher's early works, see M.N. Forster, *Hegel and Skepticism* (Cambridge (Mass.): Harvard University Press, 1989), esp. Ch. 6, pp. 97–116.

3 C. Taylor, *The Opening Arguments of the Phenomenology*, pp. 175, 182.

4 Hegel "attacks mere epistemology by showing that the forms that epistemology considers to constitute knowledge depend as much on the content of knowledge as vice-versa." T. Adorno, *Hegel: Three Studies*, trans. S.W. Nicholsen (Cambridge (Mass.): MIT Press), 1993, p. 65; Adorno also points at the latent formalism which, despite Hegel's intentions, is resultant of Hegel's metaphysical system. See T. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, pp. 38–9, 144.

necessarily entail a renunciation of the possibility of knowledge *per se,* unless knowledge is understood in the traditional sense, as unqualified knowledge. When this happens, epistemology is seen as inseparable from metaphysics, and the question of reliable knowledge is based in the disjunction: *either* unqualified knowledge, *or* no knowledge at all.

Hegel does not argue for a one-sided rejection of knowledge, rather he works to overcome the syndrome of Cartesian Anxiety. His relation to his immediate predecessors "has to do more with the assumed *absoluteness* of its initial assumptions than with a fundamental objection to critical philosophy."[5] Therefore, Hegel's position could be interpreted as a reconsideration of the *scope* of knowledge. In that sense, Hegel would be absolutely modern, for no notion has been more emphatically denied in the twentieth century than the notion of once-and-for-all given, ahistorical, and universally valid "truths." However, it is problematic whether Hegel *himself* would agree with such interpretation. For in the *Science of Logic,* he famously claims to have offered a description of God before the creation of nature. The panlogistic formula of the *Logic* is implicitly applicable to *all* events and all processes, including the process of obtaining knowledge. The fruitfulness of an epistemological interpretation of Hegel is clearly discernable, no matter to what extent the epistemological in his system is merged with – and subordinated to – the metaphysical.

The particularity of the *Logic*, Hegel admits, is that the deduction of a pure, universal science is presupposed as completed in the *Phenomenology*: "The concept of pure science and its deduction is therefore presupposed in the present work in so far as the *Phenomenology of Spirit* is nothing other than the deduction of it" (WL1, 43; SL, 49). Not by accident, it is the *Phenomenology of Spirit* that attracts the greatest deal of discussion about epistemology in Hegelian philosophy.[6] The work itself is no less difficult than the

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5 R. Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism*, pp. 111–2; See also M. Forster, *Hegel and Skepticism*, p. 100.

6 See J.S. Flay, *Hegel's Quest for Certainty* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1984); T. Rockmore, *Cognition: An Introduction to Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); J. Russon, *Reading*

Logic, but it has the advantage of overt exposition of consciousness and its cognitive and historical adventure. Although the *Phenomenology* does not propose a "standard" theory of knowledge, some epistemological content can surely be discerned therein, especially in the opening sections, whereas the *Science of Logic* seems to be only an onto-logical account, with the epistemological discussion hidden behind ontology and metaphysics.

If the *Phenomenology* is expected to offer the proof for the *Logic*, a critical review of the work reveals Hegel's inconsistency, and thus the *Logic* has to be taken as a separate ontological structure. And if *Logic* (that is, Hegel's ontology) is renounced, dialectic is therewith discarded as well. This path in Hegelian commentary goes as far back as F.A. Trendelenburg's *Logische Untersuchungen* of 1840. After accusing Hegel of the failure to properly substantiate the relationship between thought and the material object in the *Logic,* Trendelenburg wholly discards Hegel's dialectic. Further, responding to criticisms of the role of the *Phenomenology* in Hegel's system, Trendelenburg writes: "If the appeal to the *Phenomenology* were admissible, this work ought to be always read *before* the *Logic,* which is never done, or, if it ever is, only by way of introduction."[7] Indeed, in the *Phenomenology* itself, intuition, and the natural realm *per se* are treated rather parenthetically and negatively, despite Hegel's pledge. Conversely, once Hegel's system is established and articulated in the *Logic,* the *Phenomenology,* the real path of knowledge, reappears as a subordinated and rather unimportant component.

It should also be kept in mind that the path of knowledge in the *Phenomenology* is far from clear. The history of thought, the history of philosophy, and the history of humankind are pursued as a unified stream, and the impression may be created that the work is one of only sociological and anthropological nature.

Hegel's Phenomenology (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2004); K.R. Westphal, *Hegel's Epistemological Realism: a Study of the Aim and Method of Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1989).

7 F.A. Trendelenburg, "The Logical Question in Hegel's System," in Stern R., ed., *G.W.F. Hegel. Critical Assessments*, Vol. I (New York: Routledge, 1993), p. 196.

If one takes the *Phenomenology* as a mere social anthropology, then again, the *Logic* inevitably appears as a separate ontology only.

Kojève's influential lectures in the mid 1930s were also instrumental in creating an epistemological disregard for Hegel's *Logic*. In his narrow sociological interpretation, Kojève writes that

> The *Phenomenology* appears to be a philosophical anthropology. More exactly: a systematic and complete description … of the existential attitudes of man, carried out in view of the *ontological* analysis of being as such, which makes the theme of the *Logic*.[8]

Indeed, Hegel's *Phenomenology* is a social anthropology, but it is not only that. It is also an examination of the evolution of human rationality. Because for Hegel the historical is paralleled to the logical and gnoseological, a general description of the particularities of cognitive process, both ontogenetic and phylogenetic, is present in the *Phenomenology* as well. Kojève disregards this dimension of the *Phenomenology* even there where it is prevalent.[9] Necessarily then, the French commentator repeatedly contrasts the anthropological facet of the *Phenomenology* with the ontological facet of the *Logic*: "For Hegel's *Logik* is not a logic in the common sense of the word, nor a gnoseology, but an ontology or science of being *qua* being."[10] If the *Logic* is viewed solely as ontology, and provided that for Hegel logic *is* the dialectic, then the dialectic is also useless as theory of knowledge. Respectively, Kojève writes: "Hegelian Dialectic is not a *method* of research or of philosophical exposition, but an adequate description of the *structure* of Being."[11]

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8 A. Kojève, *Introduction à la lecture de Hegel*, p. 57 (the passage is not included in the English translation).

9 See esp. his interpretation of the section on Consciousness, in *ibid.*, p. 43ff. (not included in the English translation).

10 A. Kojève, *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, trans. J. H. Nichols, ed. A. Bloom (New York: Basic Books, 1969), p. 170.

11 *Ibid.*, p. 258. Similar is the position of Béatrice Longuenesse who holds that Hegel "is not concerned with a theory of knowledge. Rather, he is concerned with a new kind of metaphysics as speculative logic." See Longuenesse B., *Hegel's Critique of Metaphysics*, trans. N.J. Simek

There is an unquestionable continuity between the *Logic* and the *Phenomenology*, yet if one discards Hegel's idealism, one does not need to discard the *Logic* as an ontological error or a speculative madness. Jean Hyppolite sees it from the proper angle: "The System of categories, the speculative logic, is not only our thought, it is also the thought of the in-itself of the absolute."[12] The fact that *Logic* is simultaneously ontology does not exclude but, to the contrary, includes the possibility of the *Logic* as theory of knowledge:

> The *Logic* is *also* a theory of knowledge because it is truly "self-knowledge" (*connaissance de soi*), what Schelling's absolute identity was not. It is the self that posits itself as being, determinate being, quantity, measure, etc, but that self knows it explicitly only at the end of *Logic* in a new reflection which embraces the general movement of the moments of the Logos.[13]

In the previous chapter, I argued against the deduction of absolute idealism in the *Phenomenology*. However, the challenge to the deduction does not intend to pronounce the *Logic* a failure or

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(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), p. 50. This seems like a *contradictio in adjecto* because if metaphysics is *logic*, i.e., a theory of *thought*, then this must also be at least a speculative theory of knowledge. As I will be arguing below, dialectic, logic, and theory of knowledge are for Hegel one and the same.

12 J. Hyppolite, *Genèse et Structure*, p. 564.

13 "La logique est *aussi* une théorie de la connaissance parce qu'elle est vraiment une « connaissance de soi », ce que n'était pas l'identité absolue de Schelling. C'est le Soi qui se pose comme être, être détermine, quantité, mesure, etc., mais cela le Soi ne le sait explicitement qu'au terme de la Logique dans une nouvelle réflexion qui embrasse le mouvement général des moments du Logos," *ibid.*, pp. 567–8. To be noted that Hyppolite, having demonstrated the dependence of the *Logic* on the *Phenomenology* and admirably exposed Hegel's demonstration of the connection between the logical and the metaphysical, makes no effort at all to challenge Hegel's metaphysics, although he admits that "the passage from the temporal to the eternal is Hegelianism's most obscure dialectical synthesis" (*Logic and Existence*, p. 188). Further, he calls Hegel "simultaneously the greatest irrationalist and the greatest rationalist who has ever existed" (*ibid.*, p. 102).

a hopeless ontological/metaphysical structure. To the contrary, the conjecture of my challenge to the *Phenomenology* is that the continuity between *Phenomenology* and *Logic* can be traced in a different way. In the same way in which the *Phenomenology* is a philosophical anthropology but not exclusively, the *Logic* is ontology and metaphysics but not exclusively. The *Logic* also traces rationality in its historical development; thus the fact that the *Logic* is at the same time ontology does not exclude but, to the contrary, includes the possibility of the *Logic* as theory of knowledge. The system of categories in the *Logic* pertains to both ontogenesis and phylogenesis of knowledge *and* to the ultimate structure and principles of being. Therefore, if one assumes the claim for absolute knowing in the *Phenomenology* is not justified, then the interpretation of the *Logic* should change. One can discern the mystification in Hegel's famous (real and not metaphorical) claim:

> Accordingly, logic is to be understood as the system of pure reason, as the realm of pure thought. This realm is truth as it is without veil and in its own absolute nature. It can therefore be said that this content is *the exposition of God as he is in his eternal essence before the creation of nature and finite mind* (WL1, 44; SL, 50).

Instead of ontology or metaphysics, the *Logic* could then be construed as a theory of mind in concrete unity with its object, as a theory of human knowledge and human thought in its intersubjective sense, a description of the structure and the evolution of human rationality. The issue, therefore, is how to interpret Hegel as trusting his own insightfulness, how to take advantage of his dialectics without taking seriously the irony of cracking the code of creation. Hegel deifies thought, represents it as the movement of the absolute which knows its own self and, thus, is able to achieve absolute knowing. In fact, it is not divine but human rationality that is represented and deified in the *Logic*.

Hegelian scholarship has already attempted to construe the *Phenomenology* as replicating the categories of the *Logic*.[14] The

14 See P.G. Cobben, "The Logical Structure of Self-Consciousness," in A. Denker and M. Vater, eds, *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit: New Critical Essays*

reverse exploration, namely, the examination of the *Logic* from the standpoint of the coming-to-be social and historical cognition, is as difficult as it is rarely attempted. The *Science of Logic* has an inherent dynamic aspect, for forms of knowledge, the categories, are not simply laid there unmoved but immanently tracked in their historical subordination.

One of the few attempts to read the *Logic* from the proposed angle belongs to Michael Theunissen.[15] His influential *Sein und Schein* starts with an epigraph, a quotation from Feuerbach, which plausibly interprets the *Logic* as a phenomenology, an adventure of consciousness: "But is not then also the *Logic* another *Phenomenology?* Is not being the *phenomenological* beginning? Do not we find inside the *Logic* also a splitting up between appearance (*Schein*) and truth?" On this basis, Theunissen attempts a detailed reconstruction of the *Logic*. He starts off by interpreting Hegel's pure being as "purely unstructured simplicity" (*gänzlich strukturlose Einfachkeit*[16]) and, through the analysis of pure being, nothingness, becoming, something, etc., he concludes that "essence is the *inner* as the profound of existence"[17] – the revelation of truth behind what appears and what is. Truth is the hidden *essence*: "*Die Wahrheit des Seins ist das Wesen,*" "*Das Sein ist Schein,*" he quotes Hegel. From there, the reconstruction of the object as a totality at the end of the Objective Logic becomes possible. Theunissen stresses the importance of Hegel's negativity and critical attitude toward previous metaphysics and ontology: "The objective logic turns itself against the ontologization of theology;"[18] that is, the content of theology needs to be traced in its practical realization. At this point, and despite its auspicious beginnings, Theunissen's approach reaches its limit midway. Accepting Hegel's insight on the nature of knowledge as

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(Amherst: Humanities Books, 2003), pp. 193–211; J. Heinrich, *Die Logik der "Phänomenologie des Geistes,"* 2. durchges. Aufl. (Bonn: Bouvier, 1983).

15 M. Theunissen, *Sein und Schein. Die kritische Funktion der Hegelschen Logik* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1980).

16 *Ibid.*, p. 101.

17 *Ibid.*, p. 313.

18 *Ibid.*, p. 39.

immanent with its object, Theunissen does not argue from the standpoint of Hegel's demystification, but from the standpoint of a mystified Hegel whose argument stands and falls on his idea of God. Theunissen makes thus the issue of Hegel's demystification more obscure and interprets the *Logic* only as a "critical exposition of *metaphysics*" (italics added-N.L) at the expense of extracting its original methodological and cognitive content. Instead, Theunissen turns to search for categories of practical reason, such as love, friendship, and freedom.

In Theunissen's reading, Hegel's sublation of transcendental philosophy and the destruction of its metaphysical heritage amounts to the destruction of the subject, its dissolution in the "speculative proposition" (*spekulativer Satz)*. Remaining close to Hegel's letter, this interpretation suggests a rather fetishistic understanding of Hegel's spirit and metaphysical logicism. For Hegel's demand is that substance must be presented as a subject and that the absolute subject must be mediated by the finite subject. Hence, the speculative proposition, Hegel's God, is no God at all if it is not its opposite, a coming-to-be God that is nowhere to be found than in its otherness, and such otherness is the subject.[19]

In a parallel to (but not entirely identical with) Theunissen's procedure, the suggestion here is to read the *Logic* as a continuation of the *Phenomenology and* as an immanent gnoseological and methodological structure. Far from underestimating the *Logic's* metaphysical facet, the proposed reading aims rather at unearthing the rational content of that work. From the outset, it must be said that the immanence of method and content constitutes the greatest difficulty in reading Hegel from a non-metaphysical position.

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19 From various angles, such reading is advanced in: K. Düsing, *Das Problem der Subjektivität in Hegels Logik*; D. Henrich, "Hegels Logik der Reflexion. Neue Fassung," in D. Henrich, ed., *Die Wissenschaft der Logik und die Logik der Reflexion*, Hegel Studien. Beiheft 18 (Bonn: Bouvier, 1978), pp. 203–324; V. Hösle, *Hegels System;* See also the analytically oriented work of one of Theunissen's students H.-P. Falk, *Das Wissen in Hegels "Wissenschaft der Logik"* (München: Karl Alber, 1983), which addresses the *Logic* as a transcendental theory of subjectivity.

For if the method, dialectical logic, is "extracted" it becomes an externally imposed form, whereas the entire argument in Hegel is grounded upon an intimate unity between method and the matter itself.

In the *Logic*, the structure of thought is exposed "without empirical admixture" as Kant would call it. Hence, Hegel's objective remains absolute knowing in its purity as it is "uncontaminated" by the secondary and unimportant, and expressed as the categories of thought: "The system of logic is the realm of shadows, the world of simple essentialities freed from all sensuous concreteness" (WL1, 55; SL, 58). For the absolute idealist, such a realm is at once epistemological and metaphysical. Underlying Hegel's exposition, his idealism also makes the exposition consistent.

The *Science of Logic* is an assessment of thought from the standpoint of thought that has come to be what it is (hence, in its purity), but and also a description of the absolute. It thus becomes possible for Hegel to combine several methodological components: (1) the unity of form and content by definition (logic), (2) the immanence of its development as a self-development (thinking cannot be taken for granted at the start of knowledge, thus it begins from indeterminacy), (3) the circularity (each advancement constitutes a regress towards the ground of the totality on which the whole rests), (4) the simultaneity of analysis (insofar as every category is included in the totality), and (5) synthesis (insofar as every subsequent category is not included in the previous category).[20]

The first categories make up the "ground" which presupposes all other categories, and the further elaboration is therein contained: "It has before it, enclosed in this germ, the entire development and reckons that it has settled the whole business when it has disposed of the beginning, which is the easiest part of the business, for it is the simplest, the simple itself." This is the minimum required to proceed (WL1, 32; SL, 41). However, Hegel writes, it would be a misunderstanding to take that as a presupposition in the traditional sense. The attempt to find other presuppositions,

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20 For a good discussion of this question, see R.D. Winfield, "The Method of Hegel's *Science of Logic*," in G. di Giovanni, ed., *Essays on Hegel's Logic* (New York: SUNY Press, 1990), pp. 45–57.

such as that "infinity is different from finitude, that content is other than form, that the inner is other than the outer" (WL1, 33; SL, 41), are variously for Hegel a form of intellectual poverty (*Albernheit*). Once again, as with Hegel's sweeping dialectic generally, one can discern here a *quid pro quo*: in the *logical* sense, the *concept* of the inner cannot be without the concept of the outer and vice versa, the finite without the infinite, and so on. Hegel's strategy is grounded on these distinctions, their combination and simultaneous consideration by human reason. For Hegel, however, the logical category is also a metaphysical category, and the logical account is also metaphysical. As I already discussed in my analysis of the *Phenomenology,* the inner of a concrete object, and the notion of the inner in the human mind are not the same as the notion of inner as a metaphysical category describing the eternal nature of the world and the nature of the absolute. The real issue here is to take the absolute out of the equation.

A comparison with Kant, the instigator of critical philosophy, is appropriate at this point. The overall architectonic of Hegel's *Logic* considers the Concept as having *being,* that it as existing in itself. The "in itself" for Hegel has the opposite meaning than it has for Kant. For Hegel, it is an ontologically defined "in itself," it is the *Idea.* For Kant, the "in itself" is far from being an idea. It possesses an ontologically limitative power as designating what really *is* beyond any idea about it. For Hegel, who follows Fichte on this point, since knowledge about something is always *knowledge* about it, both the idea of the in itself and the in itself are one and the same: "Thus, what is to be considered is the whole Concept, firstly as the Concept *in the form of being,* secondly, as the *Concept;* in the first case, the Concept *is* only *in itself;* the Concept or reality or being; in the second case, it is the Concept as such, the Concept existing *for itself*" (WL1, 58; SL, 61). In Hegel's system, reality is the Concept in itself. Historically, this idea belongs to Schelling who had transformed the Fichtean self into the absolute metaphysical self. The absolute is "in itself" in Nature, and becomes "for itself" in man.[21] The absolute is the concept as existent and the existent as concept.

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21 For a recent good discussion of the notions of "in itself" and "for itself" in Hegel, see W. Lutterfelds, "Was heißt: etwas "an sich und

At the same time, the unity of concept and existence presupposes also their difference. Therefore, the being of the concept is mediated. In Hegel's words, "there results a sphere of *mediation,* the Concept as a system of *reflected determinations,* that is, of being in process of transition into the being-within-itself (*Insichsein*) or inwardness of the Concept. In this way, the Concept is not yet posited *as such* for itself, but is still fettered by the externality of immediate being" (WL1, 58; SL, 61). Such is the role of the Doctrine of Essence, which in the *Logic* is located between the Doctrines of Being and Concept. This point is important for an epistemological reading of the work. Hegel openly associates the Objective Logic (the first of the two major spirals of his exposition) with Kant's transcendental deduction (WL1, 45ff; SL, 49ff.) On the one hand, such a parallel demonstrates that Hegel proffers categorical definitions of thought, demanding at the same time a much more intimate unity between thought and the manifold. His deduction is not merely *a priori* but includes its historically grasped unity with the object. On the other hand, Hegel's quest is metaphysical. Essence is designated as the dialectical negation of the immediacy (being) of *the concept,* as the revelation of the inner of the concept (i.e., essence itself) and as mediation between being and the concept *qua* concept. Hegel's narrative, therefore, cannot end with the category of actuality (the end of the Objective Logic), but must be completed only with the Doctrine of Concept (Subjective Logic).

The *Logic* is "the *judging,* that is *determining,* of the Concept in its own self" (WL1, 56; SL, 59). It is not the judgment about an "outside given object" but the judgment itself without involving a breakdown of the concept to itself and an opposing object. In the *Logic,* this opposition in consciousness "has vanished" (*ist vielmehr verschwunden*) (WL1, 57; SL, 60). Hegel writes this with the results of *Phenomenology* in mind, therefore the entire narrative is seen "from above," from the standpoint

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für sich zu betrachten"? Eine Analyze der Hegelschen Denkform," in M. Gottschlich, and M. Wladika, eds., *Dialektische Logik. Hegels "Wissenschaft der Logik" und ihre realphilosophischen Wirklichkeitsweisen* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2005), pp. 32–49.

of absolute knowing or knowledge from within itself. Whereas in the *Phenomenology* the coming-to-be of knowledge (*das entstehende Wissen*) is the prevalent moment, and knowledge as established (*das entstandene Wissen*) is the subordinated moment, the accents in the *Logic* are different. This is why in the *Encyclopedia*,[22] the *Logic* must precede the *Philosophy of Nature* and the *Philosophy of Mind*. (In the latter, the phenomenology necessarily reappears as a subordinated moment.) In other words, the exposition follows the opposite route than the path of the *Phenomenology*.

It must be emphasized that the logical moment does not exclude the historical. The difference is that knowledge that has come to be (as proven in the *Phenomenology*) is exposed as pure structure (in the *Logic*). But the structure is also a coming-to-be structure. Within the *Logic* itself, the relationship between that which is coming to be and that which has come to be is reproduced in the focus of each of the two big spirals of the work, the Objective and Subjective Logic. They both include each other as a subordinated moment, and they both are included in the entire *Logic* as moments of the exposition of absolute knowing (and knowledge of the absolute) in the metaphysical sense. The Objective Logic is seen from the standpoint of what knowledge (and the absolute itself) *is*. This is why Hegel says, "objective logic now takes the place of previous metaphysics" as expressing the pure structure of what there is (WL2, 61; SL, 430). However, this is only half of the account. Once the Concept is established as the subject which is identical to the object (at the end of the Objective Logic), the Subjective Logic comes to portray conceptual knowledge (which is the same as metaphysical knowledge of the Concept) from the standpoint of how knowledge (and the absolute itself) *comes to be*. As the expression of the unity of

22 It is often reminded that the *Encyclopedia* is only a textbook that Hegel put together for his students. But its importance as the only full exposition of Hegel's system should not be underestimated. Heidegger is correct in noting that "the *Encyclopedia* is basically not a textbook but the shape of the new and final system [of Hegel]." M. Heidegger, *Hegel*, Gesamtausgabe 68.Bd. (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1993), p. 68.

being and thought, the Concept is traced in its divisibility, in judgments and their combination in syllogisms. Thus, at the end of the Subjective Logic, there *necessarily* occurs a new spiral, the Objectivity. Having already examined the categorical presuppositions of knowledge with respect to individuality, particularity, and universality, Hegel comes in the last spiral of his narrative to disperse the idea in the object.

We see that Hegel's *Logic* is far from being an absolute idealistic monism that negates the mere existence of reality. To the contrary, reality is presupposed as the domain in which thought (and the absolute) comes to be. Thought is a recollection of *itself* in the manifold; it is thought that knows itself as activity, as social and historical praxis. However, praxis is not the praxis of mind without the manifold; otherwise Hegel's criticism of Fichte would be futile. Thought must be therefore intimately related to nature. Hegel is strictly against the "barbaric expressions" (HP3, 431; VGP3, 337) of transcendentalism and points to reality as the counter-recipe for the constitution of mind. Thus, the otherwise absolute idealist sets forth the task of uniting the Concept with nature and addresses pure thought as only possible in the presence of the manifold. The *Logic* does not ignore the object, despite the fact that logic is a science of the pure determinations of thought. These determinations become possible only as unified with their object.

Let us now consider in detail how the adventure of the *Logic* begins. In the Objective Logic, thought as *das Gewordene (Entstandene)* is the predominant aspect in the narration, and the analysis is carried out from that standpoint. However, *das Werdende* (*Entstehende*) is also present. Thought must begin with intuition, with the manifold. But the manifold is replaced in the *Logic* by the category of "pure being." It is grasped as a concept; it is no more the sensuous manifold of the *Phenomenology,* but rather a simple, undetermined *thought* about the manifold, the thought that the manifold exists, that it has being. Mind takes being as existing. As Otto Pöggeler puts it, "the *Science of Logic* always looks simultaneously with two eyes; it sees, for example, pure being not with the fixed eye of sensuous consciousness, but equally with the eye of absolute knowing, which has proved

to sensuous consciousness its limited place."[23] At a metaphysical level, the absolute has being. At a logical and epistemological level, the object exists. In Hegel, both these moments are true, and the first in the *Logic* overwhelms the second because the second has allegedly been proven in the *Phenomenology*.

That the beginning is with being, this is a claim equally valid for human knowledge (being as manifold) and its logic (being as a concept), for the absolute (as having being), and for the history of philosophy (Hegel refers to Parmenides, Anaxagoras, etc).[24] Hegel says that the beginning is neither immediate nor mediated but has determinate content: the water, the One or the *Νούς* of the ancients, Leibniz's monad, Spinoza's substance, Descartes' self in modern times (WL1, 65; SL, 67).[25] Hegel neither demands any specific beginning nor an unqualified proof thereof. The foundational approach poses a problem which arises even in recent epistemological doctrines that otherwise determine themselves as historical and relative.[26] That the search of the absolute beginning of "all knowledge" is parallel to the search for the beginning of "all things" (or that unqualified epistemological claims lead to metaphysical ones) has already been discussed in the previous chapters. The avoidance of the one search implies the avoidance of the other.

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23 "Die Wissenschaft der Logik sieht dann gleichsam immer schon mit zwei Augen; sie sieht z. B. das reine Sein nicht nur mit dem fixierenden Auge der Sinnlichen Gewissheit, sondern zugleich mit dem Auge des absoluten Wissens, das der sinnlichen Gewissheit in sich einen Begrenzten Platz anweist." See O. Pöggeler, Hegels Idee einer Phänomenologie des Geistes, p. 260.

24 See also M. Heidegger, *Der Deutsche Idealismus*, p. 224ff.

25 For an insightful and well informed discussion of the *Logic* that includes extensive parallels to the history of philosophy see C. Butler, *Hegel's Logic: Between Dialectic and History* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1996).

26 For an interesting critique of this view, on the examples of naturalized epistemology and other current trends, see R.D. Winfield, "Hegel versus the New Orthodoxy," in W. Desmond, ed., *Hegel and his Critics* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1989), pp. 219–35.

Hegel's strategy helps him avoid this quandary. At the same time, the beginning is for him the content of all things, and it is also the content of method. Thus, there is no need to distinguish the two, for logic *is* a backwards-laid ontology and metaphysics. Hegel's absolute idealism is consistent with cognitive monism, and, thus, he is able to follow an immanent path to its object procedure. Therefore, the philosopher does not start his *exposition* with the absolute itself, but he appears to be *sure* that the exposition itself will lead to the absolute. Thus, Hegel does not postulate any "intuition" of the unity of being and thought (as Schelling) or the transcendental "I" (as Kant and Fichte). For Hegel, the subject-object identity is the result, the end of the narrative. The answer to his first question, "Where does science begin from?" is that one consistently begins with the real, the immediate. In the *Phenomenology,* one is supposed to begin with the empirical, sensuous consciousness, and this is "proper immediate knowledge." Consciousness is raised then from immediate sense-certainty to absolute knowing. The *Logic,* which already presupposes the *Phenomenology,* deals with the "Idea as pure knowledge" and knows that the object has already been made its own. In the *Logic* things are slightly different from the *Phenomenology*, yet equally realistic. Hegel calls "to consider, or rather, ridding oneself of all other reflections and opinions whatever, simply to take up, *whatever is there before us.*" He characterizes such beginning as "distinctionless" (*das Unterschiedslose*), as "*simple* immediacy," as "*pure being,*" and he concludes: "But if no presupposition is to be made and the beginning itself is taken *immediately,* then its only determination is that it is to be the beginning of logic, of thought as such" (WL1, 68; SL, 69-70).

Methodologically, the beginning of the *Logic* portrays the objective path of any cognitive act, and replicates the procedure that served as the starting point for the *Phenomenology.* This is exactly what Hegel does: once again, he reminds his readers of the role of the *Phenomenology* and how the *Logic* was deduced therein as "the pure science" (WL1, 67; SL, 68). One has to begin without presuppositions, begin with what is immediate, begin with what is "at hand." If in the *Phenomenology* this "immediate" is the sensuous manifold, then in the *Logic*, which is the science of thought,

it must be an immediate *thought*. Certainly, if the question were not about logic, one would have to begin from sensuous certainty, as in the *Phenomenology*. In the *Logic,* the beginning is an empty thought, which, nevertheless, "should *presuppose nothing*."

For Hegel's *established* idealism, the absolute beginning is also the absolute end. This is "the thought as such," which is "an *absolute* or, what is synonymous here, abstract beginning" (WL1, 68; SL, 70). The one-side is fully determined from the standpoint of knowledge that has come to be. And the abstract is an abstract which comes out of the real concrete (the existing object) as a one-sided determination of the concrete.

Further, the Hegelian systemicity requires a strictly immanent self-determination. Just because the argument is laid backwards examining what is coming to be from the standpoint of what has come to be, the procedure is free in following the logic of its object: "the progress in knowing is not something provisional, or problematical and hypothetical; it must be determined by the nature of the subject matter itself and its content" (WL1, 71; SL, 72). In that sense the beginning is not something accidental (*etwas willkürliches*) but is the grounding for the final result, because the result (the absolute) is, at the same time, absolute ground. Therefore, Hegel says, pure being as absolutely unmediated is also absolutely mediated.

It is necessary to emphasize the multilevel intentions in Hegel's thought. With respect to the absolute, it is clear that the absolute circularly comes to be what it is. This is why Hegel from the start calls the identity of identity and non-identity the most abstract, one-sided definition *of the absolute* and claims that such definition can be given already at the beginning of the investigation. The same circularity pertains to the logic or thought as *Gewordene*. With respect to thought as *Werdende*, the notion of immediacy gains more importance. Here one touches upon the difference between research and exposition. In the *exposition* of science, when the result is known, no real start, no chaotic representation of the manifold is needed. If one had to begin "from scratch," the chaotic representation would be much more important. In fact, in the *Logic* Hegel is justified to claim that the (circularly grasped) absolute is perfection, because he presupposes the *Phenomenology* as having concluded

with the need of a system of pure determinations. Thus, in the *Logic* the immediate (empty) thought and the manifold are paralleled. The manifold of the beginning of knowledge is also a concept:

> But the beginning ought not to be already a first *and* another; for anything which is in its own self a first *and* another implies that an advance has already been made. Consequently, that which constitutes the beginning, the beginning itself, is to be taken as something unanalysable (*ein Nichtanalysierbares*), taken in its simple, unfilled immediacy, and therefore *as being*, as the completely empty being (WL, 75; SL, 75).

Such is in the methodological role of "pure being." The further steps of Hegel's argument are known: pure being is at the same time nothingness. "The beginning contains therefore both, being and nothingness." The beginning turns out to be being and not-being, being and nothingness, however, this is not a pure nothingness but "a nothingness from which something must come out" (WL1, 73; SL, 73). Thus, the category of becoming is introduced. Pure being, pure nothingness and becoming are expressions of the manifold as seen from the standpoint of knowledge.

Of equal importance is the methodological issue and, from the outset, Hegel displays his intentions openly. The beginning, he says, is "the unity of being and nothing; or is non-being which is at the same time being, and being which is at the same time non-being" (WL1, 73; SL, 73). The beginning is neither the one nor the other but both contradictory aspects together. In fact, such a stance had already been articulated along with the establishment of self-consciousness in the *Phenomenology*. Two opposites are from the start demonstrated as being one and the same; Hegel explicitly challenges the law of identity. Analyzing the relationship between being and nothing, he arrives at the infamous "identity of identity and not-identity" (WL1, 74; SL, 74). Hegel usually gets the credit for this idea, an idea nonetheless already implicitly present in Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre* and openly put forth by Schelling. Yet, it is Hegel who intentionally injected this dialectical idea into logic itself.

What Hegel is saying is that the object of his investigation (and its logical portrayal in the *Science of Logic*) from the start appears

as simultaneously identical and not identical to itself, thus as self-contradictory. It appears as a process of coming to be and as something contradictory in its *essence* (as Hegel's further discussion will show). Accordingly, Hegel's narrative will be concluded only in a totality of interrelated categorical determinations that are not only external to each other, but turn themselves to each other from internal contradictoriness.

The determinations of being make up the surface, the way the object of thought (and of science) appears at the start of the cognition. The object is defined quantitatively, qualitatively, etc. – these are the categories of the Doctrine of Being. Being turns out to be contradictory and, as a whole, is opposed to essence. Charles Taylor has successfully paralleled this movement to the introduction of force in the *Phenomenology*.[27] Thought, in other words, penetrates from the surface to the inner aspect of its object. "Topographically" acknowledging essence as something inward, hidden beyond immediacy, Hegel says that essence is the "completed return of being into itself." The expression is reliant on, and explicable by, the circularity of the argument and the logic of exposition: being comes to be what it really is, discloses its inwardness, the laws of its existence, and its inherently-contradictory nature.

The *Science of Logic*, as the science of thought, portrays the penetration of thought in the inwardness of its object. Therefore, essence in Hegel is not only a self-generated thought-like entity: "essence, even in Hegel's false logicistic ontology, is not the product of thought, but rather of being."[28] Thought finds its object essentially contradictory, and, insofar as (in the *Logic*) object and thought are the same, thought is bound to express these contradictions *in* thought.

Having already portrayed a fluid makeup of the determinations of being, Hegel comes to emphatically stress such fluidity in his description of the essence. He calls the essence an eternal past, eternal becoming. Being in its essence (*Wesen*) is always a "has

27 C. Taylor, *The Opening Arguments of the Phenomenology*, p. 174.

28 G. Lukács, *The Ontology of Social Being 1. Hegel: Hegel's False and his Genuine Ontology*, trans. D. Fernbach (London: Merlin Press, 1978), p. 80.

been" (*gewesen*), the essence of being is becoming, and "becoming is the first adequate vehicle of truth" (ENZ1, 193; EL, 132). Hegel's exposition of essence[29] moves from the elucidation of simple identity to difference, opposition, and contradiction. This contradictory nature of essence is exposed with groundbreaking profundity and constitutes a radical cut from Hegel's predecessors. Essence is *self*-contradictory, it is neither contradictory in relation to its appearances alone nor in relation to the *infinite process* of its predication. The importance of this issue has up to today not been appreciated. The contradictoriness of essence is not a matter of contradictory determinations; it rather displays the issue of contradiction as contradiction. Respectively, the object is contradictory in its essence, the object *is* a contradiction and cannot be understood by any fixed determination of the understanding or *any number of them*. Therefore, the task of logic as the science of thought is to understand and present the contradiction of its object *as contradiction*.[30]

Thus, the *Science of Logic* proves to be a procedure that exhibits contradictions; it exhibits thought as moving *through* contradictions. And thought must understand this contradictoriness in order to properly understand its object. This is not to argue contradictorily and utter abracadabra, but to demonstrate contradictions in their unity as constitutive moments of both cognition and the object, to understand contradiction as an essential moment of both.

At the same time essence appears (or manifests itself) it is phenomenon (*Erscheinung*). The phenomenon, Hegel says, is the

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29 For a recent informative and textual discussion of the Logic of Essence see F. Cirulli, *Hegel's Critique of Essence: A Reading of the Wesenslogik* (New York: Routledge, 2006); B. Longuenesse, *Hegel's Critique of Metaphysics*, pp. 51–78.

30 As Hegel's *Logic* is compared by many to Aristotle, it is important to have in mind that Aristotle, despite his criticism of Heraclitus for the claim that the opposites coincide (*Topics*, Θ 159β, 30–5), admits that "essence is said to be allowing the opposites" (See *Categories*, 4b, 13-14: η δέ γε ουσία τω αυτήν τα ενάντια δέχεσθαι, τούτω δεκτική των εναντίων λέγεται, νόσον γαρ και υγίειαν δέχεται, καί λευκότητα καί μελανίαν, καί έκαστον των τοιούτων αυτή δεχόμενη τών εναντίων είαν δεικτική λέγεται). See also 6*a*, 1-2.

reflection of essence into itself, the otherness of essence. The phenomenon, therefore, is of *objective* nature. This is not to say that essence is identical with its appearances,[31] but rather that essence exists *through* its appearances so that the appearances are also part of the true picture. The moment here is profoundly realistic. It is *both* essence and appearance that make up the category of actuality (*Wirklichkeit*), actuality *must* therefore be defined as the unity of essence and existence, as sublated immediacy. That is, thought sees now the object from a novel, fuller spectrum, as the unity of inner and outer, of both its superficial and essential aspects. It is only at this point, that thought becomes able to determine its object as a substance related to (and existing in) its accidents, as a whole related to its parts, as the inner related to the outer. Thought can now comprehend the dialectic of necessity, possibility, causality, and the rest of the categories of its object. The truth of the object, its actuality, consists of all these aspects. Each one of them may be separately grasped by analysis and abstraction, the work of the understanding. However, only reason offers the unifying comprehension of their togetherness. At the same time, a separate aspect is not a mere illusion but only a partial truth. This claim is critical for the comprehension of the relationship between reason and understanding that will be discussed in the next section.

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31 Cf. D. Henrich, *Hegels Logik der Reflexion*, pp. 242–60; C. Taylor, *Hegel*, p. 268ff. Taylor, for instance, claims that the use of the categories of existence and ground aims at showing that they do not designate anything hidden beyond reality, but the structuring of it as a whole: "the inner basis of things is not some entity behind, but a necessity which finds its only full expression in external reality, precisely in the necessary contentions of this reality as a system. The full understanding of Ground shows that there is nothing behind external reality" (p. 268). But the system is not made only of surface. If this were the case, the essence would be superfluous. Further, Taylor writes that "the external reality … has nothing hidden behind it, because it is full manifestation of what is essential" (p. 279). His position is thus ambiguous. If Taylor has in mind the unity of essential and unessential, and that the concept is possible only in reality, his interpretation is powerful. But the unity of inner and outer does not exclude their difference and opposition.

In sum, thought moves from the surface (being) of its object to its essence and then returns to the surface, but surface is now seen from the standpoint of its unity with essence and is termed actuality.[32] Now, thought and the absolute are for Hegel conjoined. But in a parallel way, instead of the absolute, one may consider the structure of formatting and formatted mind (ontogenetic, phylogenetic, and scientific reason) as evolving in concrete historical unity with its object. Knowledge begins from the manifold, evolves in various ways of formally and exoterically grasping the manifold, and then completes its trajectory by reaching a totality.

The problem of totality, a problem of paramount importance, is one of the most important achievements of German idealism.[33] Introduced by Kant and endorsed by Fichte, the ideal of totality became understood by Romantics and Schelling as an organic totality, with emphasis on its internal articulation. It was Schelling who turned the epistemological discussion of totality into a metaphysical one. Although he shares the metaphysical objectives of Schelling, Hegel added to the notion of totality a radical *rational* articulation while maintaining the totality's essential organic characteristics. The idea of totality has found purchase in contemporary holism, as well. But even in relation to contemporary approaches, Hegel's position maintains a number of advantages: the immanence of his claim for totality demands a concrete exposition of the unity of form and content,

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32 This is what connects the Objective Logic with the Subjective Logic. This connection is *fundamental* but not often discerned in the existing bibliography. For an insightful exception see Longuenesse, *Hegel's Critique of Metaphysics*, Ch. 4. Longuenesse observes that "something deserves the name of 'actuality' precisely insofar as it presents a complete totality, the complete system of thought-determinations" (p. 115), and that "the whole section on 'actuality' in the Doctrine of Essence, can be read as Hegel's (metaphysical) deduction of the notion of actuality precisely insofar as it is also the beginning of a metaphysical deduction of Hegel's 'concept'" (p. 111).

33 T. Rockmore, *Hegel's Epistemology and Contemporary Philosophy*, p. 186; N.V. Motroshilova, *Put' Gegelia k Nauke Logiki* [*Hegel's Path Toward the* Science of Logic], p. 58ff.

the strict unity of the analytic and synthetic aspects, the intrinsically dynamic grasp, and the exposition of dialectical contradiction. Hegel portrays parts of the totality as members, that is, as *internally* related. The organic nature of the whole equals to genetic relationships of parts-members within the whole so that the parts-members cannot exist and be formatted otherwise than within an emerging and determinant quasi-reality: their interdependence and interpenetration within the whole. At the same time, the whole does not stand separately or above its members but finds its truth in the members, for it is literally "dismembered." Here is Hegel's remarkable description:

> Considered more closely, the whole is the reflected unity which has an independent subsistence of its own; but this its subsistence is equally repelled from it; the whole is, as negative unity, negative relation-to-self; it is thus alienated from itself; it has its subsistence in its opposite, in the manifold immediacy, the parts. The whole accordingly consists of parts, so that it is annihilated without them. It is therefore the whole relation and the self-subsistent totality; but for this very reason it is only a relative, for that which makes it a totality is rather its other; the parts; and it has its subsistence not within itself, but in its other (WL2, 167; SL, 514).

It is difficult to overestimate the importance that the contradictory relation between whole and parts has for Hegel. Instead of representing an exoteric and merely functional unity of independent parts, the Hegelian whole is a concrete living process, an "organic whole" with internal, genetic interdependencies. In this way, the focus of the logical exposition is neither on the parts alone nor on the whole alone, but on the intermediate space of transition from one to the other. The whole is thus not portrayed as a sequence of moments of rest, but as an inherent movement.

Hegel's discussion in the *Logic* is not exclusively about a totality that becomes or about a totality that has come to be, nor is it exclusively about a formatted or formatting mind. In fact, the discussion is about both: more precisely, it is about the totality that is coming-to-be, seen from the standpoint of what it has come to be. The scientific stance on knowledge involves a backward look at the evolution of knowledge and its contradictions so that the

historical and logical aspects are united in one procedure. My argument here is consistent with Hegel's circularity, a circularity that has been supported by the latest Hegelian scholarship.[34] For the *truth* of the object in its actuality is formatted only as totality and only at the end, or, as Hegel's celebrated expression goes, the owl of Minerva spreads its wings only when the dusk falls. It is the circular way of looking at the truth that makes possible the "flight from reality to a positive science" and the "transition from categorical totality to reality."[35]

The logical portrayal of the truth of the object is only one face of its historical progression. The object in the *Logic* is represented as an organic whole, internally articulated, existing in a state of permanent motion and development. The truth, as the *Phenomenology* had already claimed, is the whole along with the process of its becoming. Expressed in thought, this is the totality of the categories. In unison, this is the description of the evolutionary trajectory of the object. The truth is grasped in thought's evolution, and, at the same time, the object itself is also grasped as existing in such an evolutionary trajectory.

Because this reading of Hegel is an outline rather than a detailed account of how the concrete totality of categories is subordinated, it will suffice to say that, in my view, a reconstruction of the categories *in general*[36] would inevitably have an esoteric

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34 From various angles, this is argued in Stephen Houlgate, *Freedom, Truth and History: An Introduction to Hegel's Philosophy* (New York: Routledge, 1991), pp. 41–76; W. Maker, *Philosophy Without Foundations. Rethinking Hegel* (New York: SUNY Press, 1994); T. Rockmore, *Hegel's Circular Epistemology* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986); R.D. Winfield, "Conceiving Reality Without Foundations: Hegel's Neglected Strategy for *Realphilosophie*," in *The Owl of Minerva*, 15 (1984), pp. 183–98; A. White, *Absolute Knowledge. Hegel and the Problem of Metaphysics* (Athens (Ohio): Ohio University Press, 1983), pp. 15–41.

35 Winfield, *op. cit.*

36 Cf. here the attempts at a reconstruction in J. Burbidge, *On Hegel's Logic: Fragments of a Commentary* (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1981), and more systematically D. Wandschneider, *Grundzüge einer Theorie der Dialektik. Rekonstruktion und Revision dialektischer Kategorienentwicklung in Hegels "Wissenschaft der Logik"* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1995).

character; namely, it would aim at the refinement of Hegel's own argument. A post-Hegelian reconstruction of the categories of dialectical logic can be seriously tested only on the basis of their unity with a concrete scientific object. Since the current investigation aims at a non-metaphysical interpretation of Hegel's philosophy, it is necessary to take another look at the relationship between epistemology and metaphysics. It should not be forgotten that, for Hegel, the final outcome is not only finite knowledge but also infinite knowledge or knowledge of the absolute. This creates a number of dichotomies in his narrative. Lukács exhibits the problem with accuracy:

> When, as with Hegel, logic is conceived as the theoretical foundation of ontology, it is unavoidable that logical deductions come to be conceived as the proper forms of ontological genesis. In this way, a systematized logical hierarchy comes to form the basis of the method, through which ontological path to the self-realization of the identity of subject and object, and the transformation of substance into subject must be backwards laid (*zurückgelegt*).[37]

The circle is complete and justifies its own self. The absolute is a "backward" coming-to-be what it is, and any "higher" category is the "truth" of the lower. Thus, all processes must reproduce the dialectical structure of the absolute. The world is properly perceived as a world of structured totalities, yet it has to be extended to the absolute, the result. The quandary here is the

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37 G. Lukács, *The Ontology of Social Being 1. Hegel*, p. 51. With due stress on the immediacy of the beginning, Dieter Henrich opposes the backward layout of absolute knowledge: "Die Interpretation des Anfangs kann deshalb auch nur gelinge, wenn man den Gesamtzusammenhang und die Methode der Entwicklung reinen Gedankenbestimmungen überschaut und sich nicht auf die bekannte These von der rückläufigen Begründung des Anfangs aus dem Schluß der Logik beschränkt." But for Hegel there is no issue here. For the absolute *comes to be what it is*, as Henrich acknowledges, and so are the established "pure determinations." See D. Henrich, *Hegel im Kontext* (Frankfurt am. Main: Suhrkamp, 1975), pp. 75, 89.

following: "In that the same law of dialectical process holds for the absolute as for the entire world of finitude, there vanishes the difference between the here and beyond."[38] By the same token, and despite its striking advances, Hegel's worldview remains static: his totality is a closed-in-itself totality;[39] it has no true past, and certainly no future.

The criticism of Hegel in Lukács' *Ontology of Social Being* is profound and largely unappreciated. In it, Lukács puts forth the uncommon argument that Hegel's discussions:

> generally have a predominantly epistemological character; he proceeds from the directly given pictorial presentations, analyses the contradictions of the separating and isolating procedure of the understanding, and in this way seeks to grasp the level of reason, of the dialectical connection and opposition of these reflection determinations.[40]

More importantly, Lukács clearly relates the separation of epistemology from ontology, establishing their independence via an explanation of the distinction between reason and understanding:

> The epistemological transition from understanding to reason as a consequence of the objective dialectic of essence and appearance, in so far as the ontological priority of the dialectically structured complexes over their elements, components, etc., compels this epistemological change in the interest of the most adequate possible knowledge of reality.[41]

Finally, for Lukács, this method "should in no way be confined to philosophy as such, but should rather emerge spontaneously in each scientific area."[42] Undoubtedly, any science must

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38 G. Lukács, *The Ontology of Social Being 1. Hegel*, p. 67.

39 *Ibid.*, p. 66; this argument is not often met in Hegel literature. See for example, T. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p. 27; Flay, *Hegel's Quest for Certainty*, pp. 249–66.

40 Lukács, *op. cit.*, p. 93.

41 *Ibid.*, p. 111.

42 *Ibid.*, p. 92.

demonstrate its own totality and reach it by its own accord, without grounding itself through an imposed ontological insistence. And it must do so in order to achieve knowledge of its own particular object, not of reality in general.

The distinction between ontology and epistemology, the transition from understanding to reason, and the orientation toward totality are unfortunately undermined by Lukács' own position. Criticizing ontology, he himself advances an ontological discussion of the categories. For instance, when discussing the category of essence,[43] he does not determine whether this essence is essence in general, *τό τί ήν είναι*, or the essence of a particular scientific object. The same holds for his discussion of actuality, form, etc. It is not clear why the importance of totalities is in need of *οντολογία,* an *ultimate* description of being, especially given Lukács' admission that such a stand cannot be proven but only posited. Lukács' "ontological" insistence does not allow him to discern that the limitations of Neopositivism, against which his criticism is also directed, are not ontological but *methodological,* namely, the reductionism (even when positivism appears as "holistic") and the adherence to formal logic. Finally, it is striking that Lukács does not discuss what is concealed in Hegel's *Logic,* namely the *historicity* of categories. A totality of the categorical exposition of science (any science) is equal to its historical understanding as an inseparable aspect of the logical. An organic totality is never static. Thus, Lukács himself is trapped by Hegel's *Logic* despite his recognition that Hegel's totality is enclosed in itself.

In effect, the genesis and development of thought, as well as the genesis and development of science, can be traced as coming-to-be contradictory totalities that have parallel structures. Such would be the immanent employment of reason without metaphysical goals. Reason is the faculty that sublates the intellectual (*verständig*) portrayal and establishes a rational (*vernünftig*) level in the comprehension of its object, be that object the individual knowledge, scientific knowledge, scientific thought in general, or logic in general. However, before returning to the notion of

43 *Ibid.*, p. 83ff.

totality at the end of this discussion, it is necessary to first investigate the two fundamental vehicles for reaching totality: the relationship between understanding and reason (and, respectively, the difference between intellectual and rational comprehension of the totality) and, in turn, the movement of contradiction therein. Once these means are dissected, the notion of epistemological totality can be examined from a new perspective.

B. *Reason, Understanding, and Reality*[44]

Hegel's stance on the relationship between reason and understanding was mediated by the post-Kantian development of German idealism. It is Kant who first saw the systematic unity of the understanding as being achieved by means of reason. According to Kant, unity is never accomplished with regard to the object of intuition, but it is established with regard to the phenomena as a principle that stems from the subject. In at least two ways, there remains in Kantian philosophy a sharp dividedness of cognition. First, not only are both understanding and reason of transcendental origin, but also reason, the faculty of principles, has no empirical application whatsoever. Second, as knowledge lacks concrete unity with the object of intuition, the structure of human understanding is merely formally posited as based on some impenetrable principles, the categories. These principles are just laid out without specific analysis of their origin, content and relatedness. As Hegel ironically puts it, Kant "made the categories into static, dead pigeonholes (*Fächern*) of the intellect" (DZ, 10; Diff., 80). They just are, like innate structures of mind.

The merely declarative character and unsatisfactory conclusion of Kant's assertion that the categories are intended only for empirical application caused Schulze and Jacobi to converge (with peculiar similarity) in their criticism of it. In turn, Fichte's

44 With the kind permission of the publisher, in this section I reproduce material from my previously published essay "Reason and Understanding in Hegel's Philosophy" (*The Southern Journal of Philosophy*, Volume 44, Issue 4, 2006, pp. 607–27).

approach was preconditioned by this criticism such that his interpretation was oriented toward establishing an immanent unity of cognition to overcome Kant's difficulties. This again recalls Hegel's praise of Fichte, namely, that Fichte was the first to attempt a *rational* (i.e., unifying) deduction of the categories. In Fichte, all knowledge was deduced on the basis of a single subjective principle, and thus understanding and reason became intimately intertwined. Beginning with the initial contradiction between theoretical and practical reason, and ending with the dynamic deduction of the categories, Fichte's shift had also shown that reason is the faculty that incorporates contradiction and overcomes division. This is a very important methodological shift for Hegel's position.

This logic was implicitly followed by Schelling, who, to be sure, rarely addresses distinctions between reason and understanding. Schelling endorsed the unity of the faculties as demonstrated by Fichte. At the same time, Schelling was more concerned with the solution of the Kantian problem that the *Wissenschaftslehre* had intensified, namely, the relationship of reason to external reality. Thus, Schelling reversed Fichte's finite subject to the metaphysical absolute subject and viewed reason as the emanation of the absolute. He did not expand on the *difference* between the two theoretical faculties in the cognitive process: the understanding proffers *finite* and *fixed* determinations based on *abstraction,* whereas reason offers infinite and *unifying* determinations based on *concreteness* (in the specific Hegelian use of the term as the fullness of determinations).

Following Schelling, Hegel characterizes both reason and understanding as starting with, and emerging from, experience, as being formatted and unfolding solely in the realm of immanence (although they are of transcendental, or even transcendent, origins, as the end his narrative reveals). As the *Phenomenology* famously puts it, it is the self-reflection upon the realm of immanence that gives to rational consciousness the certainty that the object is its own.

Already in the *Differenzschrift,* Hegel sees reason as raising itself above the divided world of the understanding, as being able to acknowledge dialectical contradictory relationships in what the understanding perceives as self-identical, isolated, and static. The

philosopher defines the understanding as the "power of limitation" (*Kraft des Beschränkens*) in which the absolute is "lost." The supersession of fixed determinations constitutes the specific interest of reason (DZ, 20, 21; Diff., 89-90). Reason is addressed as the means to overcome the dichotomy (*Entzweiung*), an overcoming that corresponds to the interest of philosophy as the *κατ' εξοχήν* rational discipline. Hegel also admits that dividedness (implicitly, contradiction) is a condition of life. But dividedness must be superseded by the unifying power of reason.

> For the necessary dichotomy is *one* factor in life. Life eternally forms itself by setting up oppositions, and totality at the highest pitch of living energy (*in der höchsten Lebendigkeit*) is only possible trough its own re-establishment out of the deepest fission. What reason opposes, rather, is just the absolute fixity, which the understanding gives to the dichotomy; and it does so all the more if the absolute opposites themselves originate in reason (DZ, 21; Diff., 91).

Although reason (as preexisting in the format of life) constitutes the "origin" of the opposition, the dichotomy is equally necessary. Therefore, the divided product of the understanding is the presupposition and foundation of the appearance of reason. And "if the understanding fixes these opposites ... so that both are supposed to subsist together as opposed to each other, then it destroys itself" (DZ, 27; Diff., 95). It must be emphasized that in all his writings and despite his permanent criticisms and ridicule of the understanding, Hegel never forgets to add that the faculty of the understanding is an important, necessary, and unavoidable part of the unified cognitive process. The understanding paves the way for reason. In the *Differenzschrift,* Hegel even writes that reason without understanding is nothing, whereas understanding without reason is something. The understanding necessarily precedes reason, but reason is the superior faculty. Nevertheless, in cognition the one faculty is unthinkable without the other, in the same way in which unity is thinkable only through difference and as overcoming difference. Understanding and reason confront the same world, the world of immanence, but they do so in different ways and following different methodologies.

By enforcing reason as supreme cognitive faculty, Hegel raises the rationality standard. As Horstmann notes, the "rational is also revealed through reason and its laws."[45] What then is reason for Hegel? In tandem with his progressive cognitive content comes the metaphysical and regressive aspect of his philosophy. Reason is not only raised to the rank of a *cognitive* category but also to the rank of a *metaphysically central* category. Consequently, not only does Hegel restore the traditional quests of metaphysics (soul, world, God) but also he confirms their cognizability. He introduces reason in a panlogistic, metaphysical way as "directed toward the absolute, it searches for the absolute, whatever that could be."[46] Reason and understanding are not only "ways of cognition" but also ways of grasping what there is in its *ultimate* structure and principles.

The above notwithstanding, Hegel's shift is of dramatic importance. The elevation of reason as the unifying power over the understanding is, as W. Zimmerli aptly terms it, the "revolution of reason."[47] It is regrettable that despite its methodological centrality, the issue rarely gains specific attention in Hegel research.[48] One cannot but agree with A. Doz, who wonders: "Is the distinction clarified for us today?"[49] As existing interpretations follow

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45 R.-P. Horstmann, *Die Gernzen der Vernunft*, p. 185.

46 See R.-P. Horstmann, *op. cit.*, p. 174ff; W.C. Zimmerli, *Die Frage nach der Philosophie*, Hegel Studien, Beiheft 12 (Bonn: Bouvier 1974), esp. p. 84ff.

47 W.C. Zimmerli, *Die Frage nach der Philosophie*, esp. pp. 66–77.

48 The paramount importance of this distinction can be clearly shown in recent attempts at a critical appropriation of Hegel, e.g., by Robert Brandom. See R. Brandom, "Sketch of a Program for a Critical Reading of Hegel. Comparing Empirical and Logical Concepts," in K. Ameriks and J. Stolzenberg, eds., *International Yearbook of German Idealism*, vol. 3: *German Idealism and Contemporary Analytic Philosophy* (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2005), pp. 131–61.

49 Besides small sections in books that deal overall with something else in the existing bibliography, I have been able to trace only a few articles that specifically treat this crucial problem. See M. Baur, "Hegel and the Overcoming of the Understanding," in *The Owl of Minerva*,

Croce's famous dictum and try to figure out "what is living and what is dead in Hegelian philosophy," a brief commentary on some of them seems here appropriate.

In his analysis of the ontogenetic development of knowledge, Lukács rightfully labels Hegel's epistemological path from the understanding to reason one of "epochal significance."[50] Unfortunately, having pointed out that reason necessarily grows out of the contradictory character of the understanding as "its crowning and fulfillment,"[51] Lukács directs his discussion against the Kantian-thing-in-itself. He claims that the understanding is able to grasp appearances and abstract images of reality, whereas the essence, and reality as a totality, must be reconstructed by reason. It follows, then, that not only does Lukács traverse reason in the domain of the understanding but also vice-versa: he traverses the issues that the understanding deals with into the realm of reason, the transcendental into the transcendent,

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22/2 (Spring 1991), pp. 141–58; A. Doz, "La distinction hégélienne de raison et entendement: est elle éclairante pour nous aujourd'hui?" in H.F. Fulda, and R.-P Horstmann, eds., *Vernunftbegriffe in der Moderne* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1994), pp. 237–44; A. Nuzzo, "Verstand und Vernunft. Zu Hegels Theorie des Denkens," in *ibid.*, pp. 261–85; J. Zeleny, "Verstand und Vernunft in Hegels Wissenschaft der Logik und in der materialistischen Dialektik," in Henrich D., ed., *Hegels Wissenschaft der Logik: Formation und Rekonstruktion* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1986), pp. 209–28; B.L. Puntel, "Verstand und Vernunft in Hegels Wissenschaft der Logik," in *ibid.*, pp. 229–41; V.A. Vazyulin, "Rassudochonoye y razumnoye myshleniye v protsesse rasvitiya posnaniya" [Intellectual and Rational Thinking in the Process of Development of Cognition], in *Dialektika Protsessa Poznaniya* [*The Dialectic of Cognitive Process*], (Moscow: Moscow State University Press, 1986), pp. 173–97. P. Stekeler-Weithofer, "Verstand und Vernunft. Zu den Grundbegriffen der Hegelschen Logik," in C. Demmerling, amd F. Kambartel, eds., *Vernunftkritik nach Hegel. Analytisch-kritische Interpretation zur Dialektik* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1992), pp. 139–97; J. Burbidge, "Where is the Place of the Understanding?" in G. di Giovanni, ed., *Essays on Hegel's Logic* (New York: SUNY Press, 1990), pp. 171–82; S. Houlgate, "A Reply to John Burbidge," in *ibid.*, pp. 183–89.

50 Lukács, *The Ontology of Social Being 1. Hegel*, p. 88.

51 *Ibid.*, p. 77.

and views the categories as ultimate ontological/metaphysical entities. Thus, the function of reason becomes not only methodological-systematic but also ontological/metaphysical: the criticism that Lukács advances against Hegel necessarily leads to a new metaphysics, the metaphysics of dialectical materialism.

As a matter of fact, the understanding does grasp the inside of things (the "inverted world" of the *Phenomenology*, which is different from the immediately perceived world), and "separates the contingent from the essential" (ENZ3, 286; PM, 226). However, the understanding does not grasp the *unity* of the two. This is a mostly methodological issue which Hegel and the faithful Hegelianism of Lukács turn into an ontological one. Hegel criticizes the thing-in-itself from an ontological standpoint. Nevertheless, Hegel does not say that the understanding has no say in cognition. The most significant epistemological facet in Hegel's approach is that reason and understanding form an internal unity in their application. Lukács underscores this in his emphasis that:

> not only does reason always develop upwards, *from* the understanding, but both – being oriented towards the same reality – use the same categories as principles for ordering the same, but differently grasped reality, i.e., the reflection determinations; it is 'only' that the understanding effects in a false separation, reason, however, in a genuine dialectical coordination.[52]

Deserving specific commentary is a rare debate on the relationship between reason and understanding between J. Zeleny and B. Puntel.[53] On a line similar with Lukács', Zeleny[54] charges Hegel with universalizing the identity of being and thought, properly emphasizes the involvement of reason in the solution of the contradictions of the understanding, and plausibly argues

52 *Ibid.*, p. 88.

53 J. Zeleny, *op. cit.*, and B.L. Puntel, *op. cit.*

54 It is noteworthy that Zeleny had earlier renounced the reason-understanding distinction. See J. Zeleny, *Die Wissenschaftslogik [bei Marx] und "Das Kapital"* (Frankfurt: Europäische Verlag, 1968), p. 162.

that reason is put in action *through* the understanding even in the most advanced expressions of intellectual logic (*verständliche Logik*). By intellectual logic, Zeleny has in mind the positions of Carnap, Tarski, Goedel, and others. Standing close to the orthodox Marxist "reflection theory" (*Wiederspiegelungstheorie*), Zeleny does not seem to appreciate that being is not merely expressed in thought but is reproduced in an active and praxeological way through the categories. Thought possesses its own particularities, and cannot be reduced to direct "reflection" upon the manifold. For the categories of mind, though related to reality, are far from being direct representations of reality. In this respect, Hegel's idealism proves to be capable of grasping the mind's dialectic in a much more prolific way than orthodox dialectical materialism.

Not by accident, Puntel responds by emphasizing the difference of the "speculative rational" from the "dialectically rational," and draws attention to the esoteric "metalogical" nature of Hegel's *Logic*. In Puntel's view, "the dialectical materialistic 'demystification' proves to be above all an ambiguous (*undifferenziertes*) undertaking: does it want to be a logical (internal-logical) or external logical theory of the logical?"[55] Hegelian logic, Puntel rightfully claims, is not a mere propositional calculus[56] or a sum of abstract determinations, but a meta-consideration of the logic of the determinations themselves.

Puntel's position, however, is also problematic. Its cardinal weakness is the unbridgeable schism that is opened between the external and internal functions of the *Logic*. Puntel appears to suggest this dilemma in his employment of the either/or external/

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55 B.L. Puntel, *Verstand und Vernunft in Hegels Wissenschaft der Logik*, p. 234.

56 Cf. also P. Stekeler-Weithofer, *op. cit.* It is noteworthy, that Puntel himself was obviously interested in such an "exoteric" and "operational" approach. Well before the interpretations of R. Brandom, P. Stekerer-Weithofer, A. Grau and others, Puntel had proposed a semantic interpretation of the *Logic*. See B. Puntel, "Hegel's *Wissenschaft der Logik* – eine systematische semantik?," in D. Henrich, ed., *Ist systematische Philosophie möglich?*, Hegel Studien, Beiheft 17 (Bonn: Bouvier, 1975), pp. 611–22.

internal. He does agree with Zeleny that reason (or rational comprehension) is established as the internalization of the external, and vice-versa. Reason becomes self-assured of its unity in a reciprocal movement, through reflection over the contradictory unity of the external which is unreflectively articulated in the determinations of the understanding. Puntel also concedes that logic, for Hegel, is only the logic of the object, the "conceptualized unity of thinking and experience."[57] But it is impossible to uphold such unity in the *esoteric* interpretation that Puntel suggests.

In his earlier *Darstellung, Methode und Struktur,* in conjunction with his stressing the need for a systematic treatment of Hegel, Puntel focused on the *Logic* as the nucleus of Hegel's system. Puntel rightfully argued that the *Logic* is supposed to contain the entire system in itself and be an articulation of its perfection; it must be both finite logic as well as theology.[58] Thus, Puntel emphasized that logic *is* method and *is* structure and that there must be identity between Concept (*Begriff*) and rational thought (*vernünftiges Denken*).[59] Departing from such an interpretation of Hegel, Puntel comes in his response to Zeleny to explain logic from itself: "Logic, strictly speaking, one must call such discipline which ... develops independently of (and thus *a priori* from) any objective consideration. For logic (in the strict sense) represents the '*Instrumentarium*' of any theorizing and any objective consideration. In this sense, according to Hegel, logic is the science of thought as pure thought."[60] Therefore, Puntel concludes, the distinction between reason and understanding has only an inward function, and that there is no possibility of an operational (outward) use.

Properly emphasizing the Hegelian ontology and panlogicism, Puntel's interpretation simultaneously underestimates the

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57 B.L. Puntel, *Darstellung, Methode und Struktur. Untersuchungen zur Einheit der systematischen Philosophie G.W.F. Hegels*, Hegel Studien, Beiheft 10 (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1973), pp. 248ff.

58 *Ibid.*, pp. 101–17.

59 *Ibid.*, p. 200ff.

60 B.L. Puntel, *Verstand und Vernunft in Hegels Wissenschaft der Logik*, p. 236.

twofold nature of Hegel's philosophy. For Hegel, a category exists only when applied to the object, and logic is a mere nothingness unless that logic is objectified.[61] Consequently, the category *must* disperse itself in experience and only then can it be understood as a reflected unity with experience. Hegel does concede that every concrete science presupposes the logical as its start, but at the same time, the logical itself can be recollected only once it is diffused in its externalizations. Thus, "mind has for its *presupposition* Nature, of which it is the truth, and for that reason its *absolute prius*" (ENZ3, 17; PM, 8). In other words, science can be neither purely empirical nor purely metaphysical, but always and only both.

Rational thought is not only the thought of an ontological or theological infinite but also the thought of the finite subject. The one is expressed only through the other: nowhere does Hegel in his writings claim that there exists anything in the real world beyond finite subjects. Puntel's interpretation falters exactly midway. It is grounded on a one-sided emphasis of Hegel's ontology and, in fact, contrasts logic to the object. It is impossible for logic to express its object if this logic is articulated *only* "from within" itself and *not* from without. Therefore, Puntel's faithfulness toward Hegel is no less a betrayal.

One of most rigorous and appealing elucidations of the relationship between reason and understanding is advanced by Angelica Nuzzo in her discussion of Hegel's theory of thinking.[62] Nuzzo duly emphasizes that reason must be grasped as a supra-individual faculty, and properly underscores the systemic facet of thought in claiming that thought is possible *in toto* or not at all. Her explanation is splendid if seen from the standpoint of Hegel's response to the problem that had troubled Kant and Fichte, namely, the nature of ideality and its intersubjective validity. I have already discussed that Hegel, by correlating the "I" with the "We" in the *Phenomenology,* throws light onto the intersubjective origins and nature of transcendental concepts

61 Cf. Hösle's criticism on this issue in V. Hösle, *op. cit.*, p. 3ff.

62 A. Nuzzo, "Verstand und Vernunft. Zu Hegels Theorie des Denkens," in Fulda H.F., and R.-P. Horstmann, eds., *Vernunftbegriffe in der Moderne*, pp. 261–85.

and points to reason as expressing this. Thus, reason appears not only as individual but also as supra-individual phenomenon that has both ontogenetic and phylogenetic dimensions. At the same time, reason for Hegel is *coming-to-be* reason. This is what Nuzzo's analysis fails to focus on. She presents a rather static examination of Hegel's distinction and does not expand to an analysis of the *dynamic* constitution of knowledge in both ontogenetic and phylogenetic development. Although Nuzzo does acknowledge the dynamism of reason, such dynamism on her account is the dynamism of the system. Reason is dynamic *because* the system is dynamic.[63] On grounds that I will explain below, such an interpretation seems to focus on only one side of Hegel's position, where he, replicating Schelling's claim of the *System of Transcendental Idealism*, famously defines the task of the *Phenomenology* as being an examination of cognition from within itself. Thus, Nuzzo refers very little to understanding as the *preceding structural element and precondition* of rational thinking, and not at all to the role of the *manifold*. Not by accident, she concedes that thinking is always the thinking of the subject and, yet she ends up claiming that "there is no subject of thought but a system of thought."[64] What remains to be addressed is the evolution of knowledge, its coming to be from non-knowledge through the interaction with, and transformation of, external reality. Not only does the same (and in-advance-given) rational faculty appear at different stages of historical development, it also comes to be what it is *through its equally essential otherness*. Although Hegel is keen to focus on the former part of this twofoldness (the historicity of the in advance given reason), he is not at all against the latter.

It is precisely the evolutionary approach that can best portray the distinction between reason and understanding because

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63 For more on Nuzzo's interpretation, see "The End of Hegel's Logic: Absolute Idea as Absolute Method," in D. G. Carlson, ed., *Hegel's Theory of the Subject* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp. 187–205; "The Truth of *Absolutes Wissen* in Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit" in A. Denker, and M. Vater, eds., *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit* (Amherst: Humanities Books, 2003), pp. 265–93.

64 A. Nuzzo, *Verstand und Vernunft*, p. 269.

coming-to-be cognition is not the same as cognition that has come to be, *das werdende Erkennen* is not the same as *das gewordene Erkennen*. Cognition that has come to be, for Hegel, exists only *through* cognition that is coming-to-be. In this way, Hegel presents the relationship between reason and understanding. It is unquestionable that thought as a system presupposes a subject that thinks systematically. Moreover, reason and understanding always form a coming-to-be contradictory unity; they do not represent a pre-established structure. At the same time, structure is indeed an element of Hegel's ontology. For the Hegelian dialectic, there is no problem in that the absolute *is*, while it *is not* by being simultaneously itself and its otherness. Therefore, reason is coming-to-be what it *is*, and thus the subject as thought is identical with thought as subject.

Finally, Stephen Houlgate's interpretation of the relationship between reason and understanding is vulnerable to the same criticism as Nuzzo's interpretation. Houlgate highlights the active nature of mind and draws attention to the accord between the faculties: "In contrast to Kant ... Hegel does not distinguish between two faculties of thought– understanding and reason. Rather he points to *one* activity of thinking and shows that this activity can be more or less self-conscious. Thought can understand its concepts to be fixed in their meaning and to be clearly distinguished from their opposites, or it can come to recognize that these concepts actually collapse dialectically into their opposites when *understood* properly."[65] Underscoring the unity of thought, Houlgate fails to appreciate the differences of its elements. As for his claim that Hegel does not distinguish between reason and understanding, this can only hold as a metaphor. The necessary emphasis on the unity of reason and understanding should not lead to the independence and absolute dominance of reason over the understanding, nor to the underestimation of the *coming-to-be* of reason. Such an underestimation would create additional problems as it would surrender the domain of natural reality to the dominance of the understanding and fail to accomplish a single step beyond Kant's transcendentalism.

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65 S. Houlgate, *A Reply to John Burbidge*, p. 184.

So, with the partial exception of Lukács (who properly emphasizes the relation between empirical and theoretical knowledge but fails to appreciate the contributions of the understanding), existing approaches reach a paradoxical stance: while they often reject the metaphysical Hegel, they do nothing but emphasize a metaphysical interpretation. They overlook the dynamic nature of thought, underscore the unity of thought with itself, and neglect the unity of thought with the manifold. Thus, they read thought as a system without subject (Nuzzo), identify reason with understanding (Houlgate), and reject reason's "external" application (Puntel).

I will advance below an interpretation which focuses on the other side of Hegel's discussion of reason and understanding, on its relation to the manifold, while deliberately trying to circumvent the ontological and metaphysical projection of Hegel's system. For Hegel's dialectical logic of absolute cognition, there is no either/or, the absolute is *at once* here and beyond and can be interpreted as beyond *solely* from the standpoint of here. Being associated with the absolute, Hegelian reason is at the same time intimately connected with finite human reason, which is the sole mediator of absolute reason.

The apparent, but not real, paradox in this position is the following: my interpretation is perfectly in accord with Hegel as a part of his narrative, but it deliberately stops half way. It interprets reason as finite reason and, in accepting Hegel's claim of the unity between reason and the manifold, pursues this position in a genuinely realistic way. For, unlike Hegel, this position renounces the claim that the movement from finite to infinite reason is justified based on that infinite reason is possible only through finite reason.

In both its ontogenetic and phylogenetic development, knowledge begins from experience. First, mind is related to the immediately given; it relies on intuition, but intuition is "only the *beginning* of cognition" (ENZ3, 255; PM, 200). Second, mind "withdraws into itself." From the singleness of the intuitively given, mind attains the universality of its own content. Intuition becomes mental representation or ideally represented intuition. Thus, Hegel says: "Mind *has* intuition; the latter is *ideally* present in mind" (ENZ3, 256; PM, 201). At this point, knowledge elevates

itself to the abstract and one-sided "finite determinations" of the understanding. Certainly, between the manifold and the understanding there are a number of intermediate stages (recollection, imagination, etc.), which Hegel analyses particularly in the unduly neglected *Philosophy of Mind*.[66] The "technicalities" of this process can always be renegotiated based on concrete scientific evidence (therefore, frequent charges that Hegel is "outdated" simply miss the point). Yet the result cannot but remain the same and has been clear to philosophers since Plato: in order to know, one must already have knowledge. Such is the old paradox that post-Kantian idealism solved by appealing to the circularity and historicity of cognition. This is why Hegel's analysis in the *Phenomenology* presents perception as *humanized* sense and as the actual place where the understanding appears. Thus, when the understanding approaches the object, it is "the consciousness of such an object" (ENZ3, 210; PM, 163).

Finally, mind realizes the unity of the two preceding moments and in that it "comprehends the concrete universal nature of objects or *thought* in the specific sense that what we *think* also *is,* also has objectivity" (ENZ3, 245; PM, 192). Mind becomes reflective, examining its own path, realizing its content as both its own and the content of the external. Knowledge develops toward an articulated totality and toward the subject-object identity. However, this happens only at the end of Hegel's narrative.

The movement of knowledge is reciprocal. Knowledge ascends from the sensuously concrete to the abstract and from the abstract to the fully-determined concrete, the concrete universal. Yet *the concrete universal is not only a universal of thought separated from reality.* This key moment is overlooked by almost all existing interpretations of Hegel's doctrine of thinking, the relationship between understanding and reason, and the place and function of *Logic* in Hegel's system. Hegel's appeal to the manifold in both the

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66 For a more detailed discussion of these processes see J. Burbidge, *On Hegel's Logic: Fragments of a Commentary*, pp. 6–21; M. Clark, *Logic and System: a Study of the Transition from "Vorstellung" to Thought in the Philosophy of Hegel* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1971), esp. pp. 40–67; W. deVries, *op. cit.*

Phenomenology and the *Philosophy of Mind* is not accidental and not without rationale, nor is his holistic understanding of the manifold. Modern anthropology and psychology (including animal psychology) have confirmed that thought in its genesis addresses the manifold as qualitatively perceived, as a chaotic whole, as a totality which is *both* unarticulated *and* totality.[67]

It has been mentioned that with the emergence of theoretical knowledge, the understanding negates the manifold and surfaces from the start as *human* understanding. At the same time, in abstracting and *withdrawing* from the object, the thought of the understanding (*verständiges Denken* – further on as "intellectual thinking") can be defined as "negative thinking,"[68] i.e., as the negation of the immediately given, as the ascent from the manifold to abstract determinations. This point is in need of some unfolding, for it seems to contrast Hegel's known division of the rational in the *Science of Logic* into "negatively rational" and "speculative." Such a contrast with Hegel is correct to the extent to which reason is addressed from the standpoint of its *transcendent* countenance, as the crowning of Hegel's *metaphysics*. In this context, Hegel terms Kantian philosophy as an expression of the negatively rational (Hegel's own philosophy utters the positively rational), whereas he had already (in the *Differenzschrift*) classified Fichtean philosophy as an expression of the standpoint of the understanding. The explanation is the following: Kant, by abstaining from offering a definite answer to reason's metaphysical endeavors and by splitting

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67 I have already pointed to Piaget's structural approach. Lukács also maintains (referring to Pavlov's experiments with animals and to ethnography) that qualitative practical perceptions of complexes are formatted before they are quantitatively grasped. "In this respect it is clear that the level of separation of these reflection determinations by the understanding is not only a stage prior to their dialectical unification by reason, but also a progress in civilization in relation to the original directly unitary perception" (G. Lukács, *The Ontology of 'Social Being. I. Hegel*, p. 105).

68 V. A. Vazuylin, *Intellectual and Rational Thinking*, p. 177. Vazyulin seems to hold the view that Hegel's idealism despises natural reality, a view which seems to me as one-sided. Nevertheless, in my opinion, he presents the most insightful conception of the relationship between sensitivity, understanding, and reason in the international bibliography.

knowledge into two separate realms, had not eliminated the possibility of the restoration of metaphysics. In contrast to Kant, Fichte seemed to deny metaphysics overall. Although Fichte attempted a rational deduction of knowledge (thus forcing the *unity* between reason and understanding), he also sought to explain *all knowledge* from the standpoint of finite reason. While Hegel praises Fichte on the first occasion (the unity of the faculties), Hegel is not satisfied with Fichte's denial of metaphysics. For finite reason, Hegel thinks, is only an expression of infinite reason.

In sum, the definition of the understanding as "negative thinking" facilitates the unity that reason establishes between itself and the manifold. At the same time, such a definition makes it possible to renounce Hegel's metaphysical objectives. As negative, intellectual thinking is simultaneously determined by what it negates. Thus, intellectual thinking reproduces forms and images of the manifold[69] and distinguishes them from one another. The potential of formalism is easily discernible in this procedure. For the understanding, form and content, parts and whole, appear as separated from one another. In Hegel's words,

> in the thinking of the understanding (im *verständigen* Denken) the content is indifferent to its form, while in the comprehensive thinking of reason (im *vernünftigen* oder *begreifenden* Erkennen) the content produces its form *from itself* (ENZ3, 286; PM, 226).

Sides and aspects of the object(s) are depicted by intellectual thinking as isolated. White is white, and black is black, the intellectual consciousness "does not as yet attain to a *comprehension* of the unity of the distinct determinations" (ENZ3, 212; PM, 164), dividing necessity

69 The relation of the understanding to the manifold is central for interpretation of Hegelian philosophy in general. An irrational theological reading of Hegel, like the influential in the early 20th century interpretation of I.A. Ilin, must state that abstract form is only exoterically related to the "irrational" manifold, as "otherness (*Anderssein*) to otherness." See I.A. Ilin, *op. cit.*, p. 40. However, it is the image *of* the manifold that the understanding generalizes.

and contingency, universal and particular, inner and outer. However, by the same token, the understanding identifies the opposites. This aspect is expressed with exceptional precision by Vazyulin:

> On the one hand, the discernment of commonness in things is the discernment of the universal, but, on the other hand, this is a universal of isolated things, which means that the universal is represented … as existing in immediate identity with the particular. On the one hand, the universal is portrayed by intellectual thinking as immediately identical with the individual, as inseparable from the individual, the particular. On the other hand [the universal is presented] as simple negation of the individual and the particular; therefore, the universal is represented as isolated from the particular. Here the extremes converge, for the universal, as existing in isolation from the particular and the individual, exists by the same token as a particular, and is immediately, therefore, particular, individual … Intellectual thinking, insofar as it is abstract and analytical, does not portray the change and development of processes, but fixates objects as given, unchangeable, readymade, because the partition of objects is an abstraction from the relatedness of the partitioned sides, parts, and is, therefore, an abstraction from change, from development.[70]

Intellectual thinking tends to analyze its object, break it down into pieces, and understand it as immediately identical to itself.[71] Intellectual thinking is *abstract*. As distinct from intellectual thinking, rational thinking (*vernünftiges Denken*) is *concrete* thinking. For Hegel, abstract is only a form of representation (*Vorstellung*) whereas the form of concept (*Begriff*) is a concrete, diversified universality.

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70 Vazyulin, *Intellectual and Rational Thinking*, pp. 179–80.

71 In an astonishing passage in "Ontological relativity," Quine, arguably the foremost analytic philosopher of the last fifty years or so, clearly points out difference but still focuses on identity: "We cannot know that something is without knowing how it is marked off from other things. Identity is thus of a piece with ontology." See Quine W. *Ontological Relativity and Other Essays*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1969), p. 56. This does not happen by accident as, for Quine, "referential quantification is the key idiom of ontology" (*ibid.*, p. 66).

Unlike abstract intellectual thinking, rational thinking is reflective. Already in the *Differenzschrift,* Hegel notes that "speculative knowledge has to be conceived as identity of reflection and intuition" (DZ, 43; Diff., 111). In the *Phenomenology,* the philosopher is equally clear: "Now that self-consciousness is Reason, its hitherto negative relation to otherness (*Anderssein*) turns around into a positive" (PG, 178; PS, 139). In other words, rational thinking returns to experience and revisits the manifold. But the rationally comprehended manifold is not simply identical with the immediately given. "*Rational thinking* is *contemplated, conceptualized (Begreifende) unity of what is given in the manifold.*"[72] Thus, advanced cognition, rational knowledge, is grounded on the dialectical negation of its previous stages, on the transformation of their account to an internally articulated, unified system. Each part of such a system, having been a matter of comprehensive analysis on the basis of more general material, surpassed its limitation (narrowness), i.e., surpassed its absolutization. Reason, which "forms the substantial nature of mind" (ENZ3, 42; PM, 28), in some way appears to return to the manifold to overcome the separation and the withdrawal from experience that the abstractions of the understanding produced. Reason exists as a permanent externalization, as a self-positing which neither rejects, nor fully trusts the manifold, but rather interprets the manifold as a diversified totality. In that amounts the so-called "concreteness of truth." Truth is always concrete, varied, diverse and, in-itself contradictory.

It must be must be underlined that the rational view is *the result of a process.* There is a great distinction, phylogenetic and ontogenetic, between reality and actuality of thought and, respectively, thinking in reality and in purity. Thought in its *actuality* as rational thought (*vernünftiges Denken*) is fundamentally

72 Vazuylin, *op. cit.*, p. 188; Even I.A. Ilin is forced to admit that speculative thought is "thought that is specifically combined with intuition" (I.A Ilin, *op. cit.*, p. 53) and that "speculative universality, by including in itself individuality, draws a sharp boundary between itself and the universality of the understanding, coming thus obviously close to the empirical, sensuous universality" (p. 95).

dialectical, uniting the particular and the universal. This is an ability of the ordinary human being, the ordinary rational individual. Thought in its *reality* is not always raised up to that standard. Insofar as it remains merely "abstract," thinking remains intellectual thinking. Insofar as it becomes reflective, thinking also becomes rational. Whereas the view of the understanding "is defective in exalting a single one-sided factor to be the sole and the supreme one" (R, 51; PR, 227), the rational view does not reject the intellectual view, but incorporates it as a part of rational view.

The ability to think rationally is inherent in every individual. It is another question as to what extent rational ability is (consciously or not) being exercised. Hegel expresses this issue with elegance when he writes that "the concept of the thing does not come our way by nature. Anyone has fingers and may take a brush and colors, but that does not make him a painter. The same is true about thinking" (R, 17; PR, 235). Respectively, people often tend to think more with understanding than reason, or even think irrationally, emotionally, and stereotypically.[73] Moreover, in the view of an intellectually thinking person only senses can be concrete, whereas thinking is abstract. To the contrary, in the view of a rationally thinking person, it is thinking proper, that is, concrete and dialectical. Hegel advances a specific comprehension of the notions of abstract and concrete,[74] seeing them as functioning within an internally articulated and historically developing totality.

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73 I have discussed this issue with relation to stereotypes in my article "Το πρόβλημα του στερεοτύπου και η χεγκελιανή ανάλυση της γνωστικής διαδικασίας" ["The Problem of the Stereotype and the Hegelian Analysis of the Cognitive Process"], in *Ουτοπία* [Utopia] vol. 30, May-June 1998, pp. 131–42. See also my discussion of L. Vygotsky above.

74 For a discussion of various definitions of these terms in Hegel's writings, see P.T., Grier, "Abstract and Concrete in Hegel's *Logic*," in G. di Giovanni, ed., *Essays on Hegel's Logic*, pp. 59–75; E.E. Harris, "A reply to Philip Grier," in *ibid.*, pp. 77–84. The best, most extensive, yet sadly unappreciated treatment of this problem in the international bibliography belongs to E.V. Ilyenkov. See E.V. Ilyenkov, *Dialektika Abstraktnovo y Konkretnovo v Nauchno-Theoreticheskom Myshlenii* [*Dialectics of the Abstract and the Concrete in Scientific-Theoretical Thinking*] (Moscow: RPE, 1997).

In his homonymous pamphlet, Hegel addresses the question directly: "Who thinks abstractly?" (WDA, 575-581; A, 460-465). His response is striking: "the uneducated person, not the educated" (WDA, 577; A, 462). It is rather those people that judge the whole based on a single issue, those who rush to deliver a verdict based on that issue, and in so doing fail to actualize their rational ability. *They* think abstractly. To illustrate this, Hegel employs the example of a murderer who is about to be brought to justice. Catching sight of him, a few women whisper that he is a strong, handsome, and interesting man. But the crowd reacts: How can a person who has committed a murder possess anything positive? If this person has committed a crime, then this person is absolute evil. Black is black, and white is white. "This is abstract thinking: to see nothing in the murderer except the abstract fact that he is a murderer and to annul all other human essence in him with this simple quality" (WDA, 578, A, 463).

Hegel's narration continues with the example of a female who is about to buy eggs. Dissatisfied with their quality, she tells the seller that her eggs are rotten. It is possible that the buyer made a mistake, but this mistake does not make her a bad person from top to bottom. Yet, this is the case in the infuriated mind of the seller. On the basis of one issue, the enraged seller responds with uttering universal judgments about her client, invoking everything therein, from the way she dresses to personal and family details, subsuming them all under the crime that the woman found the eggs "rotten." The seller clearly thinks abstractly and fails to actualize her rational ability.

Reason and understanding function within a concrete unified whole of human rationality. Their separation is a conditional and comes into sight as the exaggeration of the one side over the other. Thus, it is inaccurate to say that the understanding (respectively, intellectual thinking) deals *only* with the analysis and only with the particular. As Stephen Houlgate puts it, the "understanding cannot grasp its own rational character. Understanding is the source of conceptual generality; however, at the same time, it cannot leave its concepts abstractly in general, but must determine them by marking off their particular limits vis-à-vis another concept."[75] Ilyenkov

75 S. Houlgate, *A Reply to John Burbidge*, p. 186.

is even more insightful when he maintains that any abstraction of the understanding brings forth the dialectic, although "there is not dialectic in that abstraction itself." This happens because the abstraction of the understanding:

> brings forth the dialectic only in an exoteric, "negative" way, causing thus against itself an opposing abstraction. Each of the two contains the dialectic, actualizes it in the general path of the development of spirit, but holds it, as Hegel says, only "in itself," only latently, and demonstrates it only through the relation to the other.
>
> The dialectic becomes clearly acknowledged only in the concepts of reason … Through reason, the dialectic becomes clear "for itself," i.e., it is acknowledged … in the form that corresponds to its nature.[76]

When this happens, when the dialectic becomes acknowledged, the understanding becomes reason. When this does not happen, intellectual thinking sees the object *through* the identity alone. Here is how Vazyulin treats this issue:

> Intellectual thinking cannot be absolutely abstract and absolutely analytic. It does synthesize. However, synthesis is determined by analysis and exists in two opposed and united forms: to the extent that division has already taken place, synthesis is *external relation of essentially different sides* … to the extent that division has not taken place, has not been accomplished, synthesis is *immediate identity*. As distinct from intellectual thinking, rational thinking deals with the portrayal of unity, not of difference, but unity of partitioned sides … Whereas synthesis for intellectual thinking amounts to the establishment of … *external relations,* synthesis for rational thinking is the establishment of differences *within the unified,* and therefore, establishment of *internal relations* … Whereas synthesis for intellectual thinking is the portrayal of immediate identity, synthesis for rational thinking is the portrayal of mediated unity, the unity of the different.[77]

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76 E. Ilyenkov, *Dialectics of the Abstract and the Concrete in Scientific-Theoretical Thinking*, p. 209.

77 V.A. Vazyulin, *Intellectual and Rational Thinking*, pp. 187–8.

It must be emphasized that the development toward the rational is a progression that requires time depending on the specific process at hand. One can assess both ontogenetic and phylogenetic development as well as the ontogenesis and phylogenesis of scientific thought, from a similar angle. In each case, the formation of a rational totality passes through its own phases and its actualization is subjected to series of social and historical conditions. However, the ability to comprehend the object as a unity in diversity is undermined by the pursuit of truth as exclusively attached to the immediately given and as an abstraction from the immediately given. Such a tendency well-known to Hegel is also prevalent today in empirical science and in various versions of Positivism and Neopositivism. In those trends, rigorousness and truthfulness are pursued through the split of the particular from the universal, the whole from its parts, and vice-versa, each one seen as identical to itself. This is the case, Hegel says, when the understanding takes "possession of philosophy … the understanding as abstracting, and hence as separating and remaining fixed in its separations" (WL1, 38; SL, 45).

The logic of the understanding fails to grasp the unifying *transitional* moment among the separately grasped aspects of its object so that logic is perpetually condemned to break down "the one side" and "the other side." In fixating the sides, it misses the *relationship and the passing over of the one to the other,* the "pure transition" (PG, 212; PS, 168) in which the relationship consists.

The understanding grabs here the one and here the other, without acknowledging their internal unity and mutual dependence and without acknowledging the internal nature of contradiction. Thus, as Hegel puts it, the contradiction "remains an external reflection" of contradictory determinations, and the understanding "holds these two determinations over against one another and has in mind *only them,* but not their *transition,* which is the essential point and which contains the contradiction" (WL2, 77-8; SL, 441). This is what the rational mind achieves because:

> mind is not an inert being but, on the contrary, absolutely restless being, pure activity, the negating of ideality of every fixed category of

> the abstractive intellect, not abstractly simple but, in its simplicity, at the same time a distinguishing of itself from itself (ENZ3, 12 ; PM, 3).

Abstract understanding holds onto "either A or –A" (ENZ1, 244ff; EL, 172ff), it holds *either* the particular *or* the universal, *either* the whole *or* its parts, *either* necessity *or* freedom, etc. When the understanding links those concepts to one another, it posits them as *externally related*. The understanding achieves their *Nebeneinandersetzung*, whereas the real issue is to grasp them precisely as coexisting *contradictory* concepts. Moreover, the acknowledgment of contradictory concepts and propositions is not sufficient without explanation of their intimate unity.

Already in the *Differenzschrift* Hegel had noted that "the understanding has not grown into Reason if it does not recognize … a connection of both propositions." The mere acknowledgment of opposites goes back to the beginning of history, and that contradictions exist all over is a fact of everyday life. Even dogmatic (pre-Kantian) philosophy does not deny such fact, says Hegel. However, for dogmatic philosophy "both principles A=A and A=B … remain in their antinomy unsynthesized" (DZ, 49; Diff., 116). What is sought, then, is to demonstrate the synthesis, to think in terms of contradiction, to consider contradiction as a central issue for the development of being and knowledge. As Hegel writes in *Differenzschrift*, "once the antinomy is acknowledged as the explicit formula of truth, Reason has brought the formal essence of reflection under its control" (DZ, 40; Diff., 108). In the *Logic*, he is equally clear that "the thought of contradiction is the essential moment of the Concept" (WL2, 563; SL, 835).

Whereas understanding *fixes* the opposites and leaps from the one to the other without reflecting on their dynamic unity, reason comprehends coming-to-be totalities and seizes opposites as simultaneously co-existing in a concrete whole. Respectively, one may discern two ways of comprehending things, the analytic and the synthetic. Whereas the first denies contradiction, the second involves contradiction. Whereas the first focuses on relative stability, the second focuses on movement. Whereas the first focuses on being, the second focuses on becoming. At the same

time, dialectical synthesis does not negate analysis but holds it as its moment, and the notion of becoming does not negate being, but incorporates it. The evolutionary cut thus sheds light on the logical. Hegel gives clear priority to becoming over being or renders being as becoming. As he famously writes in the *Lectures of the History of Philosophy,* there is no proposition of Heraclitus that he does not incorporate into his logic (VGP1, 320; HP1, 279).

C. *Hegel's Critique of Formal Logic and the Problem of Contradiction*

1. *Does Hegel Pose a Challenge?* Hegel's distinction of reason and understanding equals the designation of contradiction as an epistemological category and as a fundamental ontological attribute. The faculty of reason is denoted as the ability to cognize contradictoriness, to comprehend it within a coming-to-be totality. Moreover, in order to grasp the object as a becoming through contradictions, a different, rational logic (*vernünftige Logik*), what Hegel terms speculative logic,[78] is needed. The fact that contradiction *is,* is accepted by anyone. The "*αντίθετα*" are known and treated in philosophy since the times of Heraclitus and Plato, if not earlier.[79] As an issue of knowledge, contradiction was broadly discussed in modern philosophy, and with it the law of identity came under scrutiny. Nicolaus de Cusa, through his concept *coincidentia contradictorum,* Locke, Rousseau, Voltaire, Leibniz, and several other thinkers are often quoted for being critical of this law.[80] It is also noteworthy that the issue of contradiction is addressed by contemporary philosophy independently of the

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78 Cf. D. Duquette, "Kant, Hegel and the Possibility of a Speculative Logic," in G. di Giovanni, *op. cit.*, pp. 1–16.

79 With respect to Hegel, see Baum, *Die Entstehung der Hegelschen Dialectic*, pp. 6–28.

80 For more detailed accounts, see R. Brandom, and N. Retscher, *The Logic of Inconsistency: a Study in Non-Standard Possible-Word Semantics and Ontology* (Totowa, NJ: Rowman and Littlefield, 1979); B. Croce, *What is Living and What is Dead in the Philosophy of Hegel*, trans. D. Ainslie (London: Macmillan 1915, reprinted with a new introduction by P. Gunter, New York: University Press of America, 1985), pp. 33–51; E. Ilyenkov, *Dialectical Logic*, pp. 11–26.

Hegelian approach. Wittgenstein, for instance, in his *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics* endeavoured to overcome the "superstitious dread and veneration by mathematicians in face of contradiction," and to "change the attitude toward contradiction and the proof of non-contradictoriness" (*die Einstellung zum Widerspruch und zum Beweis der Wiederspruchsfreiheit zu ändern*).[81] The problem of contradiction is also addressed in recent analytic philosophy. The most recent and forceful attacks against the law of non-contradiction have been launched by Graham Priest.[82] Previous attempts include R. Brandom and N. Retscher,[83] though neither related their research directly to Hegel. By means of formal logical derivations, they attempted to examine what could be *inferred* about a self-contradictory ("inconsistent") universe. This position recently evolved into an analytically grounded "inferential holism"[84] advocated by R. Bradnom, P. Stekeler-Weithofer, and A. Grau, which they allege is a feasible interpretation of Hegel's position.[85]

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81 Wittgenstein L, *Remarks on the Foundations of Mathematics*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2001), pp. 122, 213.

82 See G. Priest, *Beyond the Limits of Thought* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), and *In Contradiction: a Study of the Transconsistent*, (Boston : M. Nijhoff, 1987). For a comprehensive account of the discussion in analytic philosophy, see B. Armour-Garb, J.C. Beall, and G. Priest, eds., *The Law of Non-Contradiction* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004).

83 R. Brandom, and N. Retscher, *op. cit.*

84 On the interpretation of Hegel in terms of "inferential holism" see R. Brandom, *Tails of the Mighty Dead* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), Ch. VI; For a critique of Brandom see T. Rockmore, "Brandom, Hegel and Inferentialism," in *International Journal of Philosophical Studies*, Vol. 10(4), pp. 429–47; For similar approaches see A. Grau, *Ein Kreis von Kreisen. Hegels postanalytische Erkenntnistheorie* (Paderborn: Mentis, 2001); P. Stekeler-Weithofer, *Hegels Analytische Philosophie. Die Wissenschaft der Logik als kritische Theorie der Bedeutung* (München: Schönnigh, 1992); For a close to inferentialism earlier interpretation see also A. Kulenkampff, *Antinomie und Dialektik. Zur Funktion des Widerspruchs in der Philosophie* (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzlersche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1970).

85 For further discussion of analytic appropriations of Hegel see K. Ameriks, and J. Stolzenberg, eds, *Deutscher Idealismus und dis analytische*

In regard to German idealism, as I have tried to demonstrate in the first two chapters of the current work, the import of contradiction is emphatically portrayed in the writings of Kant, Fichte, and Schelling. Thus, the assault on the law of identity and the support of contradiction was not at all Hegel's invention. Unlike his predecessors, however, Hegel is the one who directly confronted this issue from the start of his career and the one who addressed contradiction *qua* contradiction. That is, Hegel addressed this category not as mere "opposition," and not as a "mistake" or "illusion," but as the necessary path of the development of thought, as real contradiction and not only contradiction "in definitions." Hegel comes thus to proffer his notorious dialectical logic.

Despite Hegel's insistence, the notion of dialectical logic as the logic of contradiction has been surprisingly challenged even by Hegelian commentators from Hegel's death to the present. According to J. McTaggart, for instance, "for Hegel, as for other people, contradictions could not really exist."[86] In recent scholarship, Terry Pinkard proposes a similar interpretation:

> Briefly put, Hegelian dialectic is the attempt to show that some apparently incompatible basic set of categories (or basic categories of seemingly incompatible philosophies) can actually be shown to be compatible when they are put in the context of a larger set of categories. Hegel's philosophy has the misleading appearance of always occurring in "triplets" since he always begins with some basic category, and then offers a speculative explanation using some new category or set of categories to show how the conflict is *only* apparent. Hegelian dialectic is no mysterious from of logic that transcends or is an alternative to ordinary logic. It is a strategy or explanation for a

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Philosophie der Gerenwart. German Idealism and Contemporary Analytic Philosophy (Berlin and New York: Walter de Gruyter, 2005); P. Redding, *Analytic Philosophy and the Return of Hegelian Thought* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); T. Rockmore, *Hegel, Idealism and Analytic Philosophy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005).

86 J. McTaggart, *Studies in Hegelian Dialectic.* 2nd ed. (New York: Russell & Russell, 1922), p. 63. See also pp. 86, 93, 127, etc.

> philosophical program that attempts to reconcile most of the major dualisms of the history of philosophy[87].

Instead of the "either/or strategy," Pinkard writes, Hegel follows a "compatibilist strategy" but "makes it clear that he has no quarrel with formal logic *per se* and that he is not trying to replace formal logic with something else, such as "dialectical logic." "[88]

I have already discussed how Hegelian philosophy is closely related to the Kantian project (including how the *Logic* is categorical philosophy). Moreover, one must certainly concede the sublation of each category in Hegel's narration by a broader scheme. That is, the sublation of each category does not designate its formal negation but its inclusion in an eventually formatted totality. In this respect, dialectic has "explanatory" power.[89] However, Pinkard's notion of "seemingly" contradictory categories and his stance on the issue of formal and dialectical logic call for further discussion.

Pinkard points to the distinction between reason and understanding. He concedes that the understanding ends up in affirming contradictory concepts and that understanding alone is not in a condition to explain the situation in which it finds itself. The faculty of reason is required.[90] Reason then *is* the faculty that solves these contradictions (ENZ1, 126ff; EL, 79ff). However, does this mean that contradictions are only "apparent"? If contradiction is only "apparent" and not real, then the concept (or category) A must be true, whereas the concept (or category) B must be false.

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87 T. Pinkard, *Hegel's Dialectic: the Explanation of a Possibility* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988), pp. 5–6.

88 *Ibid.*, p. 81.

89 Cf. also T. Pinkard, *op. cit.*, p. 11ff., and p. 19.

90 The same in J. McTaggart, *Studies in Hegelian Dialectic*, p. 84ff. Whereas the understanding holds each category separate, independent and ultimate, reason is able to "apprehend the unity of categories in their opposition" (p. 88). "What the Understanding denies is the possibility of combing two contrary notions as they stand, each independent and apparently self-complete. What the Reason does is to merge these ideas in a higher one, in which their opposition, while in one sense preserved, is also transcended" (p. 89).

In Pinkard's view, philosophical explanation "is called for when there is an apparent (*Schein*) incompatibility between two fundamental beliefs, each of which seems on its own to be true."[91] Contradiction is a mere illusion, and, in order to "avoid the contradiction" of the lower level, thought escapes to a broader concept. Thus, the broader concept includes in itself both previous concepts. According Pinkard, the category of being eventually can be explained only in terms of the "whole system of categories found in the *Science of* Logic."[92] Not only the category of being, but also "the doctrine of being is self-contradictory" (the first section of the *Logic*), and this leads to the doctrine of essence as expressing "substructure/superstructure relations."[93] Still, Pinkard does not answer the main question, namely, in what exact way the "seemingly contradictory" previous concepts are integrated into a larger one. If they cannot be both correct, then one of them has to be discarded. If they are correct (as in fact Hegel suggests) then the "broader concept" includes in itself two *contradictory* concepts. However, Pinkard emphatically repeats that the contradiction is only "apparent and not real."[94]

Pinkard's position becomes less sustainable if one considers that, in Hegel's narrative, each category is in itself contradictory and, therefore, must be sublated (that is, the sublation does not come from the outside but is an inherent way of the evolution of each concept). In fact, the *self*-contradictoriness is what preconditions the movement of the system, and this constitutes Hegel's greatest novelty[95] for it transcends the externality of contradictions. On the one hand, the contradictoriness of the categories means only that they are one-sided, and their sublation does not mean annihilation. Quality, for example, as a *side* of the whole does not cease from being quality. *Within* that whole, in which

91 T. Pinkard, *op. cit.*, p. 19.

92 *Ibid.*, pp. 26, 29; Cf. in McTaggart: Hegel passes "to a new category in which the first two are contained" (*Studies in Hegelian Dialectic*, pp. 94–5).

93 T. Pinkard, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

94 T. Pinkard, "Hegel's Idealism and Hegel's Logic," in *Zeitschrift für philosophische Forschung*, 33 (1979), p. 211.

95 Cf. V. Hösle, *Hegels System*, p. 172ff.

a separate concept (e.g., quality) is one-sided, there exists, then, contradiction. On the other hand, contradiction is not external to quality, for quality is not simply *opposed* to quantity but, as Hegel tries to show, due to its internal contradictory nature turns itself into quantity (or cannot be *thought* without quantity). And all these in-themselves-contradictory sides are within one subject-system. This latter is thus self-contradictory. How then can contradictions be mere illusions?

That Hegel makes *logical* claims can be shown even by pointing out that his main work is called *Science of Logic* and not science of anything else.[96] Unquestionably, his logic is not another *formal* logic. In this respect, and this is a very important aspect, Hegel does not charge formal logic *per se*, but this "ordinary" logic which, as Pinkard concedes, "Cannot understand the statement that x is identical to y, and x is not identical to y."[97] Hegel's "sound insight" and concern was "with providing a speculative explanation of how ordinary logic itself could be possible."[98] That is, Hegel's logic, like Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*, is rather a metalogic. Then, what is the role of contradiction in such a metalogic? For Pinkard, Hegel's "speculative" logic means that "there is no deductive inference here; rather, a new determinateness is added. That is why it is called speculative: we add something that cannot be deduced

96 Cf. also A. Arndt, *Dialektik und Reflexion. Zur Rekonstruktion des Vernunftbe-griffs* (Hamburg: Felix Meiner, 1994). Arndt advances a very informative discussion of the discourse around reason in the development of European Philosophy since the 17th century conflict between rationalism and empiricism. His focal point is Hegel, and Arndt defends Hegel's ontological critique of Kant, as well as Hegel's treatment of dialectic and contradiction as expressions of reflection and negativity (pp. 145–230). However, Arndt's conclusion is that Hegel makes use (*Ausnutzung*) of contradiction, but does not logically support it. He wants only to justify "the employment of the *concept* of contradiction (*den Gerbrauch des* Widerspruch*begriffs*," p. 218). This position not only undermines Arndt's defense of Hegel, but it also leaves mysterious *why* Hegel calls his main work *Science of Logic* and why he is so critical toward traditional logic throughout his writings.

97 T. Pinkard, "A Reply to David Duquette," in G. di Giovanni, *op. cit.*, p. 21.

98 *Ibid.*, pp. 23, 22.

from the given content."[99] Should one infer, then, that Hegel's "deduction of categories" is not deduction at all, but rather a logically illegitimate expansion?

That Hegel's dialectic challenges the law of identity is beyond question. Moreover, one can neither comprehend nor shield Hegel's dialectic without accepting the centrality of contradiction.[100] M.N. Forster's sympathetic defense of Hegel is a typical example of this difficulty. Forster's view is that Hegel, by sublating the subject-object dichotomy, does talk about contradiction, but does not maintain contradiction. "Hegel's philosophical viewpoint thus officially makes no claims whatsoever about reality, and *a fortiori* no contradictory claims about it," because Hegel speaks about "neither reality nor thought but somehow a synthesis of the two." Forster also alleges that "what is simply becoming *in a sense* has a being, while *in a sense* it is nevertheless *nothing*."[101] His position amounts to a reversal of the real issue in Hegel, who would hardly agree to portray his *Denkbestimmungen* with "in a sense" or "somehow." What Hegel actually says is that becoming is *both* being and nothingness *in one and the same sense*. The beginning is "the unity of being and nothing; or it is non-being which is *at the same time* being, and being which is *at the same time* non-being" (WL1, 73; SL, 73 – *italics added*). The question that Forster precisely does not raise, is what Hegel is categorical about, namely, the import of contradiction as the sublation of the law of identity, for "no consciousness thinks, has notions, or speaks, according to this law, and no existence of any kind at all exists in accordance with it" (ENZ1, 237; EL, 180).

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99 *Ibid.*, p. 22.

100 It seems to me that a defense of Hegel's epistemology without this notion cannot be effective. For example, see K. R. Westphal, *Hegel's Epistemological Realism: A Study of the Aim and Method of Hegel's* Phenomenology of Spirit (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1989); K.R. Westphal, *Hegel's Epistemology: a Philosophical Introduction to the* Phenomenology of Spirit (Indianapolis/Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 2003).

101 M.N. Forster, "Hegel's Dialectical Method," in F. Beiser, ed., *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 144, 147.

The discussion above has two major components. These are first, Hegel's relation to formal logic and second, the issue of contradiction in dialectical logic. I shall treat them in sequence by bringing into play the already argued-upon distinction between reason and understanding.

2. *Dialectic and Formalism.* It has already been discussed that human rationality functions as a unified whole, and neither can reason be absolutely separated from the understanding, nor vice-versa. It seems therefore crucial that formal logic and the understanding are not identified. The laws of the understanding are the *object* of formal logic,[102] but formal logic as science is the expression of human rational ability. Any science, insofar as it truthfully grasps its object, is an expression of rational thinking, indeed an expression of *advanced* rational thinking. Thus, formal logic is a rational science which, having intellectual thinking as its object, examines the understanding and its expressions in language and speech. Such examination presupposes rational, reflective thinking. Therefore, formal logic does not negate reason and universal connectivity, and its potential in scientific cognition is appealing.

Whenever formal logical rules are applied, no matter how simple or complex, it is not simply the understanding but *human rationality as the unity of understanding with reason* that guides the application of these rules. And when the understanding comes into sight through the rules of formal logic, it is not the understanding alone but *reason* that guides and determines such appearance. As Hegel would say, *es ist der Verstand als tätige Vernunft.* Thus, in any advances of formal logic, it is not the understanding by itself that acts, but reason. For instance, when a contradiction in a formal operation arises, the shift toward the solution of that contradiction is initiated by reason. Reason is the faculty that is capable of comprehending contradiction, of identifying what led to it, and of discerning the way of its solution. Reason *is* the ability to address the issue at hand as a totality. It is reason that judges the truth, not the understanding,

102 See also V.A. Vazyulin, *op. cit.*, pp. 181–2.

and it is reason that judges the understanding itself. The understanding is not in a condition to adequately cognize reason. To the contrary, the anatomy of the higher faculty is the key to the anatomy of the lower, and the anatomy of reason is the key to the anatomy of the understanding.

Therefore, it is one thing to say that formal logic is an examination of the *expressions* of thinking in language and speech and another to say that thinking is exhausted over the examinations of its signs and its language.[103] Reason may employ the methods of the understanding as its preceding stage, but reason cannot be reduced to those methods. Through those methods alone, reason cannot attain self-knowledge, for their application lacks the reflecting component that is necessary for rational thinking. As Hegel writes, had reason been staying at the level of the understanding, it would be an "understanding reason" (*ein Verständiges*) and would not be able to posit thinking (DZ, 28; Diff., 96). If this were the case, then the only possible logic would be formal logic. This is precisely the dead-end in the endeavors to formalize dialectical logic: they employ the lower faculty in order to evaluate the higher.

Formalization is a customary way of positively approaching the issue of dialectic and contradiction. Known attempts of a formalization of dialectical logic are those of M. Kosok,[104] A. Doz and A. Duparle,[105] T. Seebohm,[106] among others.[107] The

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103 It is appropriate to relate the current analysis to my previous discussion of the relation between thought and language in J. Piaget and L. Vygotsky.

104 M. Kosok, "The Formalization of Hegel's Dialectical Logic," in A. MacIntyre, *Hegel: A Collection of Critical Essays*, pp. 237–287.

105 A. Doz, D. Dubarle, *Logique et Dialectique* (Paris : Libraire Larousse, 1972). Although the intention is to "study Hegel's thought and its dialectical organization from a mathematical point of view" (p. 3), the authors are careful to claim that only "selective" aspects of dialectics in Hegel can be formalized.

106 T. Seebohm, "The Grammar of Hegel's Dialectic," in *Hegel Studien,* Beiheft 11 (1976), pp. 149–80.

107 For a general overview See D. Marconi, ed., *La Formalisazzione della Dialettica: Hegel, Marx e la Logica Contemporanea* (Torino: Rosenberg &

question of antithesis and antithetical considerations in formal systems is well-elaborated in modern and cybernetic research, and the merging of formal logic with mathematics has produced various models of the so-called "polyvalent logics." Perhaps the most striking instance of such development is represented in the work of a former Hegelian, G. Günther.[108] Admitting that traditional Aristotelian logic is the "exact expression and mirror of classical metaphysics,"[109] Günther unmistakably identifies that Hegel's argument is rooted in the doctrines of Kant, Fichte and Schelling, and argues that Hegel targets and wants to overcome the laws of traditional logic, the law of identity, non-contradiction, and the excluded middle.[110] Moreover, Günther claims, Hegel's advance was only a particular occasion of a broader historical shift of the metaphysical paradigm of his time. Works such as Hegel's *Logic* began to appear simultaneously in several scientific fields, in political economy with Marx's *Capital,* in mathematics with Booles' algebra, etc. Such tendency was only strengthened in the twentieth century by Carnap, Frege, and cybernetics.

Departing from such a penetrating view, however, Günther moves in the direction of formalism and absolute relativity. He charges Hegel with inequitably focusing on the subject-object relation, with ignoring contradiction for the sake of reconciliation,[111] and with underestimating the importance of formalization.

Sellier, 1979). That volume contains a collection of essays from Polish, English, French and Italian authors addressing the possibility of formalization of dialectical logic. Although the problem is grasped properly (how to demonstrate contradiction as contradiction), formalization itself seems to doom the enterprise from the very beginning.

108 G. Günther, *Das Problem einer Formalisierung der Transzendental-dialektischen Logik. Unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Logik Hegels*, Hegel-Studien, Beiheft 1 (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag, 1964), pp. 65–123. G. Günther, *Idee und Grundriß einer nicht- Aristotelischen Logik. Die Idee und ihre philosophische Voraussetzungen*, 2. erw. Aufl. (Hamburg: Meiner, 1978). Günther defended his doctoral dissertation on Hegel's *Logic* in 1933.

109 G. Günther, *Idee und Grundriß*, p. xiv.

110 *Ibid.*, p. XII, 115.

111 *Ibid.*, p. 45ff., 258.

Günther emphasizes the capability of thought (once thought is emancipated from the metaphysical bi-valent paradigm) to produce polyvalent calculi. Such a position, however, is not oriented toward the object and abstains from any notion of truth. This is something that Hegel would have never agreed with.

Although formal research addresses the problem of contradiction directly, it attempts to express it without content, thus, one-sidedly. In abstaining from the object and its truth, formal research is based on an ontological assumption about contradiction, yet it does not explain contradiction. Further, by being an *abstract* logic, formalization is based on the laws of formal logic instead of overcoming them. This happens not by accident. The examination of the external materializations of mind in signs, symbols, letters, numbers, etc., is not the same as examining mind itself. The first is the domain of formal logic, the second is the domain of dialectical logic. Thus, formal logical contradiction differs from dialectical contradiction. When Hegel talks about the mind and about thinking, he means its philosophical interpretation, not merely the logistical rules and operational schemata of formal logic. Therefore, the sublation of formal logic, *as sublation,* cannot amount to a simple juxtaposition of another "formal" logic with the first, nor a naked negation of the first. For the German idealist, therefore, even a million-valent logic is not but the examination of the understanding.[112]

As Charles Taylor insightfully describes the it, "Hegel in fact would have been delighted with the modern developments in which logic has been shown to be continuous with mathematical thinking, since he always classed mathematics as the most external form of thought, incapable of really grasping the conceptual structure of things."[113] John Burbidge lends even more clarity to this issue:

> The failure of logical discussions is not their formalism. That indeed represents the high-point of their achievement. It is rather that the effort to avoid self-reference leads to a theory of types, which ignores

112 See also T. Pinkard, *A Reply to David Duquette*, p. 23.
113 C. Taylor, *Hegel*, p. 318.

> the necessary transitions from symbolism to meta-theory, and from meta-theory back to a revised symbolism. The service that Hegel provides is to make explicit this dialectical moment so that speculative reflection, holding up a mirror (in Latin, *speculum*) to its own operations can articulate what would be essential for an adequate meta-theory. Far from being arbitrary, this procedure attempts to avoid the contingencies inherent in much contemporary logical discussion.[114]

This is where Hegel's critics (and many of his supporters) miss the point. Dialectical logic, from its early assessments by F. A. Trendelenburg, and E. von Hartmann (*Ueber die dialektische Methode*, Berlin, 1868) up to current disputes, has caused numerous renunciations. An interesting dialogue with W.V. Quine is mentioned by Yvon Gauthier: "I asked professor Quine how one could go about Hegel's dialectical logic. He simply answered that one would have to change the laws of logic in order to make sense of Hegel's logic."[115] Bertrand Russell, in his *History of Western Philosophy*, claims that almost all of Hegel's propositions are false[116] and that his system is built upon stupid and trivial confusions. In his article "What is dialectic?" Karl Popper repeats an argument that was first raised by E. von Hartmann. Setting forth an image of a "dialectician" who simply claims about the law of identity that "this law of traditional logic must be discarded," Popper objects: "If two contradictory statements

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114 Burbidge, *On Hegel's Logic: Fragments of a Commentary*, p. 157

115 Y. Gauthier, "Hegel's *Logic* from a Logical Point of View," in R.S. Cohen, M. W. Wartofsky, eds., *Hegel and the Sciences* (Boston: Kluwer, 1984), p. 303. In that article, Gauthier attempts what he thinks is a "recursive treatment" to dialectic by formalizing it because "to put it bluntly, the dialectical method is not a logical method and Hegel's endeavor from a logical point of view does not deserve the name 'logic' " (p. 305).

116 B. Russell, *A History of Western Philosophy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972), p. 730. For a critique of Russell, see K. Dulckeit, "Hegel's revenge on Russell: The 'is' of identity versus the 'is' of predication," in W. Desmond, ed., *Hegel and his Critics*, pp. 111–31.

are admitted, any statement whatever must be admitted."[117] Even more, Popper substantiates his claim by appealing to those same rules of formal logic. Inevitably, then, his conclusions are that Hegel's philosophy "represents the worst of all … absurd and incredible philosophic theories,"[118] and the *Science of Logic* is a sample of "not merely obsolete but typical of pre-scientific and even pre-logical ways of thinking."[119]

It is a misunderstanding to interpret Hegel's charge against the laws of formal logic *formally*. This inevitably leads to the claim that everything goes with everything. Hegel argues for the positive function of contradiction in knowledge, but contradiction is for him the counterpart of identity, and both terms pertain to concrete totalities. Therefore, Hegel's dialectical logic does not juxtapose a pencil with an elephant, but contradictory parts, aspects, of a concrete whole. Therefore, Hegel views formal logic as a necessary and unavoidable, yet surpassable (*aufhebungsfähig*), stage of cognition as a side and part of the cognitive process. For Hegel, the proposition of reason is not merely A=–A as opposed to A=A. Reason's claim is that "A=A and simultaneously –A." Moreover, reason examines and comprehends the unity of both in terms of their content and thus comprehends the different determinations not as merely posited, but as concretely unified. If the unity is broken down in its parts, and these parts (the separate determinations) are taken in isolation, Hegel's argument collapses. What the philosopher argues for is not formal negation or one-sided, naked rejection, but dialectical sublation. The formal universal substitution of A=A with an A=–A, would follow the rules of formal logic which is supposed to sublate and could easily produce absurdities. Popper is correct in pointing to this issue, but his "dialectician" has very little in common with Hegel. Popper attacks a straw man: contradiction for Hegel is universal but concrete, not abstract. Contradiction comes to play in a universally concrete space or the space of concrete universals, and dialectical logic functions only within that space.

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117 K. R. Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations. The Growth of Scientific Knowledge* (New York: Routledge and Keagan Paul, 1963), p. 316, 317.
118 *Ibid.*, p. 330.
119 *Ibid.*, p. 335.

For Hegel, therefore, traditional formal logic needs both esteem and complementation. He is categorical in that "the contempt for the knowledge of the forms of reason must be regarded as sheer barbarism" (WL2, 375; SL, 682). Hegel praises the "infinite merit of Aristotle" for setting forth the examination of the forms of thought but also adds: "It is necessary however, to go further, and to ascertain both the systematic connection of those forms and their value" (WL2, 269; SL, 595). Hegel raises the issue of the matter itself, *die Sache selbst,* for he is far more interested in truth and in real things than formal logic is. As the examination of the form of the representation needs to be supplemented by concrete content, Hegel comes to oppose the ordinary concept of logic which "has rested on the separation, presupposed once and for all in the ordinary consciousness, of the *content* of cognition and its *form,* or of *truth* and certainty" (WL1, 36; SL, 44). It is in this process that Hegel invokes reason. The *differentia specifica* of reason, of νούς, was already clear to Aristotle: "Assertion is the saying of something concerning something, like affirmation, and is in every case either true or false. But this does not always happen with reason which can be true with respect to what the constitutive essence of the thing is."[120] One should not be surprised by Hegel's dithyrambs about the *On the Soul*, that it is "still by far the most admirable, perhaps even the sole, work of philosophical value (*vom spekulativen Interesse*) on this topic" (ENZ3, 11; PM, 3).

To a large extent, Hegel's assault on formal logic has to do with the jurisdiction and justification of this discipline, that is, with the extent to which formal logical structures become methodological devices which illegitimately expand "in realms where they do not belong, namely the realms of organic relationships, dynamic processes, and concrete truth."[121] One may object that formal logic does not concern knowledge about objects or about being

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120 «Εστι δ'η μέν φάσις τι κατά τινός, ώσπερ και η απόφασις, και αληθής ή ψευδής πάσα. Ο δε νούς ου πάς, αλλ' ο του τί εστί κατά τό ήν είναι αληθής», Aristotle, *On the Soul* Γ 430, 26–28.

121 Cf. R. Hanna, "From an Ontological Point of View: Hegel's Critique of the Common Logic," in J. Stewart, ed., *The Hegel Myths and Legends* (Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1996), p. 270.

and that logical truth or logical validity is not the same as cognitive truth. This objection, however, avoids the question: Based on what logic can knowledge be obtained? Although formal logic is not interested in truth but in "correctness," it *does* claim to offer the necessary conditions of obtaining truth, the conditions that thought should not violate. Thus, when it comes to the definition of "proper" thinking, the rules of formal logic are smuggled back as untouchable axioms. This way of approaching thought is carried into philosophical discourse as something of universal validity. As one can easily discern, the situation today is no better than it was during Hegel's lifetime.

Another argument in explaining Hegel's dissatisfaction with formal logic would be that logic in the early 19th century was in no way near its current development in the works of Frege and Russell.[122] The missing systematization and lack of rigor in that discipline might have influenced the tone of Hegel's attacks, which are anywhere between aggressive and ironic. However, even in its most advanced expressions, formal logic is based on the fundamental principles that were set a long time ago by Aristotle. It is precisely these principles that Hegel attacks, namely, identity, non-contradiction, and exclusive middle. (Leibniz's addition of the principle of sufficient reason admitted the limitations of formalism, amplifying them at the same time.) Thus, although modern formal logic is far from the "classical," it is doubtful whether Hegel today would have withdrawn his charges. Hegel points to a qualitative change of logic rather than its quantitative expansion.

The paradoxes to which formal logic operations lead are well-known to logicians.[123] But Hegel's point goes much further than that. The limits of formal logical analysis are exposed when by all means formally correct arguments lead to contradictions. One

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122 See T. Pinkard, *Hegel's Dialectic*, p. 73ff.; *A Reply to David Duquette*, pp. 23–5.

123 For an exposition with respect to Hegel's criticism, see H. P. Kainz, *Paradox, Dialectic, and System: A Contemporary Reconstruction of the Hegelian Problematic* (University Park and London: Penn State University Press, 1988).

set of considerations about the object x, by following the laws of "proper" thinking, may lead to conclusion y. Another set of considerations about the object x, by following the laws of "proper" thinking, leads to the precisely opposite conclusion, –y. Thus, both y and –y stand next to each other, each being equally "correct." In philosophical discourse, this problem is of paramount importance. To recall the examples that were discussed above, Popper attempted to prove the impossibility of dialectics, whereas others attempted to prove the possibility of dialectics. One does not need to be well-versed in logic in order to understand that both ways are *formally* correct. Hegel, although relating his discussion to his metaphysical objectives, had discerned the limitations of formal analysis already in the *Differenzschrift*: "The whole analytic approach lacks the basic consciousness that the purely formal appearance of the Absolute is contradiction" (DZ, 41; Diff., 109). Formalism denies contradiction but cannot avoid it. Generalizing the situation in the *Science of Logic*, the philosopher drew a more grotesque picture: The history of development of thought is an illustration of dogmatic systems equally justified and equally opposed to each other. As one can discern at this point, the question of truth cannot be avoided. To the contrary, what must be sublated is "the inadequacy of this way of regarding thought which leaves truth on the one side" (WL1, 29; SL, 38-9), that is the separation of the form of truth from its content.

In relating logic to truth, Hegel also relates logic to metaphysics. His position is that it was the preceding intellectual developments, especially Kant's critical philosophy, what had transformed metaphysics into logic (WL1, 46; SL, 51). In fact, this issue was raised at least as early as the works of another great logician, G.W. Leibniz. Realizing the limits of formal logical reasoning, Leibniz discerned the twofold function of the copula (ontological and predicative) and concluded that the separation between subject and predicate cannot be held as a guiding thread for truth claims.[124] He thus came to supplement the three

124 In more detail, see M. Heidegger, *The Metaphysical Foundations of Logic*, trans. M Heim (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), esp. Ch. 1 and 2; G. Tuschling, "Nessesarium est idem simul esse et non esse.

basic principles of Aristotelian logic by adding a fourth one: the requirement that every logical proposition must have "sufficient reason," effectively acknowledging that it is the subject itself that is behind the subject-predicate distinction. As key to Leibniz's metaphysics, this idea, the nucleus of the subject-object identity, could not be propelled in the epistemological context of the empiricist-rationalist debate. Another round of historical discussion was needed, and it began with Kant. Kant separated formal from transcendental logic, theorizing the latter as the logic of truth. But Kant himself unwillingly reproduced formalism and succumbed to the law of non-contradiction. Such twofoldness led directly to Fichte's explorations in the *Wissenschaftslehre*. Schelling (who reintroduced the role of the object in cognition) was clearly aware of the origin of this discourse and, in his discussion of contradiction in the *Weltalter*, pointed directly to Leibniz.

In the *Phenomenology*, Hegel claimed to have overcome the subject-object distinction. Thus, in the *Science of Logic* Hegel finds it possible to claim that "logic coincides with metaphysics, with the science of *things* grasped in *thoughts*" (ENZ1, 81; EL, 56). Things, for Hegel, coincide with thought, and thus logic as the science of thought must be at once a science of things and not merely a formal enterprise. As a matter of fact, in the context of Hegelian philosophy, everything *is* thought.[125] Hegel advances an ontological and metaphysical system and directs his criticism against the Kantian thing-in-itself, the beyond that Kant separated from the here. I have criticized Hegel's metaphysics in the previous sections. What I wish to emphasize here is that the need for separation between logic and metaphysics, and the critique

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Zu Hegels Revision der Grundlangen von Logik und Metaphysik," in H.-C. Lucas and G. Planty-Bonjour, eds., *Logik und Geschichte in Hegels System* (Stuttgart – Bad Cannstatt 1989), pp. 199–226.

125 "Kant had reduced all ontological questions to epistemological problems … so Hegel, accepting Kant's epistemological arguments so completely that he does not even consider it necessary to repeat them, goes on to provide the ontological counterparts of those arguments." See R. Solomon, *From Hegel to Existentialism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 22.

of metaphysics, should not lead to the rejection of Hegel's innovative understanding of logic. Hegel reacts to Kant's praise of Aristotelian logic by claiming that this discipline:

> since *Aristotle* . . . has not lost any ground, but neither has it gained any, the latter because to all appearances it seems to be finished and complete. Now if logic has not undergone any change since Aristotle . . . then surely the conclusion which should be drawn is that it is all the more in need of a total reconstruction; for spirit, after it labors over two thousand years, must have attained to a higher consciousness about its thinking and about its pure, essential nature (WL1, 46; SL, 51).

Thus, not only does Hegel designate the range of jurisdiction and justification of formal logic but also he points to the need of its advancement. He insists on this issue clearly and categorically, writing that "in fact, the need for a reconstruction (*Umgestaltung*) of logic has long been felt" (WL1, 46; SL, 52) and rendering his own *Logic* as a "completely fresh start with this science" (WL1, 16; SL, 27).

The philosopher's response to the limitations of traditional logic is to put forward dialectical logic as the logic of reason and rational comprehension, as the logic of reflection, yet not a merely contemplative logic but a historical-praxeological one. In dialectical logic, reason elevates itself above the one-sidedness of the definitions of the understanding and reflects over their relationships and contradictions: "the contradiction is precisely the rising of reason above the limitations of the understanding and the resolving of them" (WL1, 39; SL, 46). Reason considers contradiction and movement, internal relationships, and combines contradictions in one and the same, in a concrete totality. Moreover the totality is not externally and formally viewed, and its construction is not a separate from the object construction, but a reconstruction of *die Sache selbst,* the object itself. In this context, to repeat, the sublation of the law of identity does not mean that anything goes. Therefore, Hegel does not advance a one-sided, naked, *formal* rejection of *formal* logic. Such a rejection would be just the other side of the same coin. In dialectical logic, formal logical inquiry is not eliminated but sublated. Hegel makes use

of concrete contradiction and overcomes formal logic by relating form to content, part to system, and logic to history.

Hegel's criticism is therefore immanent. It is not restricted to counter-proposing another set of rules for "proper" thinking, but *invokes the practical, historical evolution of thought.* It is by glancing at the real historical development of thought in history, by examining the phenomenological adventure of reason, that Hegel came to discern a contrast between human rationality and the ways in which this rationality was logically expressed. He discerned a contradiction between the dynamic and contradictory totality of spiritual development of humanity and the static, non-contradictory, analytic way of recollecting this development in thought.

For Hegel, the totality of thought is also the history of its coming-to-be what it is. Thus, the historical becomes a presupposition of the logical in both ontogenetic and phylogenetic development. By looking backwards at history, Hegel managed to develop a broader perspective on thought than by focusing on the thinking process of a separate individual and his or her speech, or on a separate generation and its deeds. Addressing the entire history of thought in its externalizations, in the results of the intellectual development of humanity as the realm of application of reason, the great dialectician saw the true dimension in which the categories of reason evolve. From this vantage point, formal logic appeared as mere *device,* as "ossification" in a certain period of the active development of spirit. That Hegel saw the overall picture from an upturned angle, this is another issue which I have already discussed in the previous sections.

The great German idealist put the question of logic with tremendous insightfulness. Thought must be addressed not as self-identical or static, but as the evolving historical production of the activity of humanity taken as a whole. Once human rational abilities are addressed from such evolutionary and praxeological angle, then "ordinary logic is, therefore, in error in supposing that mind completely excludes contradiction from itself. On the contrary, all consciousness contains a unity and a dividedness, hence, contradiction" (ENZ3, 27; PM, 16). Abstract concepts, the creations of the understanding, are the signs, the externalizations of the dynamic activity of thought. In Hegel's poetic expression,

the abstract concept is the form in which the determination "spontaneously catches fire, posits itself as dialectical and thereby is the *beginning* of the manifestation of reason" (WL2, 288; SL, 612). Once the historical setting, arrangement and dialectical implications of abstractions are realized, the understanding becomes reason. Reason acknowledges its dialectical nature, for reason is the faculty that comprehends and incorporates contradictions. However, reason cannot be examined by formal logic. For that task, dialectical logic is needed.

3. *The Logic of Thought and the Problem of Contradiction.* The discussion of the limitations of formal logic led to the issue of contradiction. Much of what Hegel claims about contradiction has to do with his ontological and metaphysical principles. In various ways, this has been argued by Wolff, Düsing, Hanna, Pippin, Taylor, Hösle, and many others. In what follows, I will deal with the epistemological importance of the principle of contradiction and separate it from its metaphysical implications.

That Hegel's argumentation unfolds from within absolute idealism is helpful in clarifying many of the obscure passages of his writings. For instance, the categorical analysis of syllogisms and judgments in Hegel's Subjective Logic can be explained as a procedure not contrary to formal logic, but parallel to it. Syllogisms and judgments are grounded on, and examined from, the standpoint of the categorical apparatus of reason. In that sense, as Hanna argues, Hegel's critique of "common logic" is based on his ontology as a "structural" look at the categorical presuppositions of the utterances of such logic. Hegel wants to "establish an ontological logic over and above the common logic." Hanna's argumentation is right on target in claiming that Hegel's logic is based on metaphysics. However, Hanna is unconvincing when he categorically claims that Hegel offers "no 'denial' of *any* principle of the common logic."[126] To be sure, Hegel *does* present a denial of formal logic, albeit not a *formal* denial.

126 See R. Hanna, *From an ontological point of view*, p. 272. See also Longuenesse, *Hegel's Critique of Metaphysics*, p. 45: "If the "laws of thought" are to

Further, the interpretation of Hegel's philosophy as a theory of subjectivity sheds more light on his methodological strategy. Düsing has systematically interpreted Hegel from the standpoint of subjectivity and defended Hegel's use of contradiction. According to Düsing, it is the absolute subject that Hegel portrays as possessing and applying the dialectical categories and their contradictions. Contradiction is thus a contradiction within the Concept which, in Hegel, denotes an ontological-metaphysical entity.[127] Düsing's interpretation is also useful in addressing Hegel's theory of judgment.[128] Hegel writes that in the judgment, "Since the predicate is supposed to be *not* what the subject is, we are faced with a *contradiction*" (WL2, 310; SL: 630). The judgment "the rose is red" already combines two contradictory categories, the particular and the universal. But Hegel's use of this judgment is not the same as its use by formal logic. Hegel's approach can be explained only by taking into consideration the metaphysical background, the Concept, the absolute subject as constituting "the content and the meaning of the judgment in general. Through this content the speculative judgment is distinguished from the mere form of judgment."[129] In other words, Hegel has

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be rejected, it is … only insofar as they convey an uncritical, dogmatic metaphysics." Longuenesse reads Hegel through Kant's transcendental deduction but oversees the impact of Fichte and Schelling on Hegel's position. Although she demonstrates throughout that Hegel makes positive use of contradiction, she emphatically denies, paradoxically enough, that Hegel attacks any of the laws of formal logic.

127 K. Düsing, *Das Problem der Subjektivität in Hegels Logik*, pp. 289–95.

128 This topic is extremely important, difficult, and surprisingly underrepresented in the Hegel discourse. For some good discussions see A. Arndt, C. Iber, and G. Kruck, eds, *Hegels Lehre vom Begriff, Urteil und Schluss* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2006); K. Düsing, "Syllogistik und Dialektik in Hegels Spekulativer Logik," in D. Henrich, ed., *Hegels Wissenschaft der Logik: Formation und Rekonstruktion,* pp. 15–38; W. Krohn, *Die Formale Logik in Hegels „Wissenschaft der Logik". Untersuchungen zur Schlusslehre* (München: Carl Hanser Verlag, 1972); G. Sans, *Die Realisierung des Begriffs. Eine Untersuchung zu Hegels Schlusslehre* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2004).

129 K. Düsing, *op. cit.*, p. 252; the same is clear in religious interpretations. For example, I.A. Ilin writes: "The Concept is not plural, but one,

in mind not only the particular judgment about the rose, but also the metaphysical notion of judgment in general. For the absolute idealist, "judgment is first and foremost an ontological reality."[130] Every judgment (*Urteil*) is a primordial separation (*Ur-Teilung*) between subject and predicate. This idea belonged to Hölderlin and was adopted by Hegel[131] as early as in his *Faith and Knowledge*. Thus in the *Logic,* Hegel addresses not only the subject in a particular judgment (e.g., the rose) but also the ideal subject. In this sense, "the subject is not only one property, but the totality of its properties."[132]

The same interpretation works for Hegel's analysis of syllogisms. As the philosopher puts it,

> not only is an indefinite number of syllogisms equally possible for one subject and not only is any single syllogism *contingent* in respect of its content, but this syllogism that concerns the same subject must also pass over into *contradiction*. For difference in general, which in the first instance is an indifferent *diversity,* is no less essentially *opposition* (WL2, 360; SL, 670).

Therefore, even if a syllogism is formally correct, its formal correctness is not equal to its truthfulness or untruthfulness. Syllogistic

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it includes in itself all transitions and unfolds in a system of definitions as the element of meaning" (I. A. Ilin, *Filosofia Gegelia*, p. 162).

130 C. Taylor, *Hegel*, p. 309.

131 That the judgment is an ontological reality should not overshadow Hegel's *dialectic*. For instance, Georg Sans advances a metaphysical interpretation of Hegel, emphasizes the unity between the Concept (*Begriff)* and judgment, and holds that Hegel "destroys the nature of judgment through the speculative proposition" (Sans, *op. cit.*, pp. 62–72). But the "dialectical movement of the speculative proposition" does not happen over and above real historical subjects. Sans metaphysical interpretation leads him to juxtapose Hegel's and Hölderlin's (metaphysical) theory of judgement to that of Fichte and Reinhold. (pp. 39–57). Sans thus oversees the *dialectic* itself in Fichte (which Hegel elaborates), and the dialectic itself in Hegel (which means that the metaphysical judgment is at the same time expressed through the finite subject).

132 K. Düsing, *op. cit.*, p. 257.

forms "concern only the correctness of knowledge of facts, not of truth itself" (WL1, 17; SL, 38).

On the one edge of Hegel's narrative, concept is the absolute as *Λόγος*. This, however, is only half of the philosopher's account. On the other edge of the narrative, the only real historical subject that is equipped with the categorical apparatus to carry out judgments and syllogisms is humanity, human cognition in both it its ontogenetic and phylogenetic aspects. Thus, subjectivity is not only absolute divine subjectivity, but also finite subjectivity. This crucial aspect of Hegelian philosophy was explicitly admitted by Düsing in the postscript to the second edition of his book and was later also emphasized by Hösle, whose fundamental investigation on Hegel's theory of subjectivity has been frequently quoted in the current treatise.[133]

So far, contradiction has been placed in the context of Hegel's philosophy as a theory of subjectivity. However, there is another issue of utmost importance to Hegel's philosophy, namely, the issue of the *objectivity* of contradiction. Contradiction is not only a property of the subject: if contradiction is kept apart from reality,[134] the unification of the *Logic* with that reality, which Hegel demands, is impossible. For when Hegel says that "the rose is red," he also has in mind the rose itself, and not only the subjective judgment about that rose. Accordingly, when he says that the truth of the subject is the totality of determinations, he also has in mind the real rose and means that rose is not only "redness" but also the totality of contradictory properties.

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133 For a good discussion of the problem see also W. Jaeschke "Absolute Subject and Absolute Subjectivity in Hegel," in D. E. Klemm, and G. Zöller, eds., *Figuring the Self: Subject, Absolute and Others in Classical German Philosophy* (New York: State University of New York Press, 1997), pp. 193–205.

134 For instance, R. Kroner's excellent defense of Hegel's position suffers from the one-sided juxtaposition of "empirical contradiction" to "speculative contradiction." (R. Kroner, *Von Kant bis Hegel*, vol. 2, pp. 302–62, esp. 326–342). Kroner's defense is splendid even compared to recent discussions.

An interesting argument for the objectivity of contradiction in Hegelian philosophy is advanced by Wolff.[135] Drawing a parallel between Hegel's reasoning and the reasoning of pre-critical Kant in the *Der Begriff der Negativen Großen,* Wolff proposes that Hegel's stance on contradiction is based on an ontological equilibrium in which any positive measure is counterbalanced by a negative. For example, the notion of zero (0) is a contradictory unity of two measures that annul each other. In his critical period, Kant changed his position. By invoking the distinction between phenomena and the thing-in-itself, he came to term two of the antinomies of reason as subcontrary (both may be true, but may not both be false) and the other two as contrary (both may be false but may not both be true). Hegel produced a metaphysical insistence that rejected Kant's way of solving the antinomies. For Kant's position pronounces contradiction a mistake, an illusion of reason, whereas Hegel claims that contradiction is of objective nature. According to Wolff, Hegel's insistence on contradiction is only metalogical, and Hegel equally endorses the law of non-contradiction. Thus, Wolff argues that Hegel's approach is indeed scandalous, even though it is logical on its own and not susceptible to formal logical criticism, as formal logic abstains from ontological considerations.

In what way Hegel's criticism rejects formal logic it has been discussed already in the present treatise. What Wolff's interpretation diminishes, is that Hegel's idealism has a very specific meaning. On that issue, Wolff takes the justified criticism of S-J. Kang. According to Kang, "Hegel's assertion about the objectivity of contradiction does not consist in its direct 'ontologization,' but in a newly constructed grasp which is based on his, self-differentiated from traditional metaphysics, understanding of negativity."[136] Therefore, Hegel's contradiction is an objective

135 M. Wolff, *Der Begriff des Widerspruchs. Eine Studie zur Dialektik Kants und Hegels* (Königstein /Ts.: Hein, 1981); in English, see M. Wolff, "On Hegel's Doctrine of Contradiction" in *The Owl of Minerva*, Vol. 31, 1 (Fall 1999), pp. 1–22.

136 "Hegels Behauptung der Objektivität des Widerspruchs besteht als nicht in der direkten „Ontologisierung" der Kontradiktion, sondern in

logical contradiction which serves as the principle of all movement; but, this principle does not stem from the object. Hegel "binds the logical contradiction with the objective movement of things in that he explains this movement through the logical contradiction ... the thing moves itself at the will of the contradiction."[137] The absolute idealist grounds such a view on his teleological grasp of being, in which contradiction is not the principle of movement, but the principle of being insofar as being is posited as identical with movement. It is in this way that Hegel is able to render being as life and identity as a negative unity.

Kang's view is close to that of Düsing. It is commendable, but it seizes only one-half of Hegel's argument. Kang claims that Wolff's approach amounts to "ontologization," but Kang himself admits that Hegel renders contradiction ontologically (as a principle of being). There obviously arises a question about the difference between Kang and Wolff. Their difference is not in that the one proposes a "direct" ontologization whereas the other proposes an "indirect" ontologization. According to Wolff's interpretation, contradiction stems from the object whereas, according to Kang's interpretation, it is the other way around and contradiction stems from the subject. As a matter of fact, for Hegel, contradiction stems from both subject and object. One needs not reduce contradiction to *either* the subject *or* the object, but see *both* subject and object as contradictory. In this sense, Hegel writes that

> there is in fact nothing, either in heaven or on earth, either in the spiritual or the natural world, that exhibits the abstract "either-or" as it is maintained by the understanding. Everything that is at all is concrete, and hence it is inwardly distinguished and self-opposed ... it is contradiction that moves the world, and it is ridiculous to say that contradiction cannot be thought. (ENZ1, 247; EL, 187).

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einer sie neu konstruierenden Auffassung, die auf seinem sich von der traditionellen Metaphysik unterscheidenden Verständnis der Negativität basiert" S.-J. Kang, *Reflexion und Widerspruch.*, p. 206.

137 *Ibid.*, p. 209.

It is one question that the contradictions in finitude do not suffice to establish the spiritual absolute totality that Hegel wants to establish, and another question that contradictions do not exist in objective reality. It is true that contradictions eventually relate to the absolute subject, but it is also true that they never *converge* in this subject. Such is Hegel's great difference from Schelling. Hegel's absolute subject does not possess even a scent of transcendence and identity but exists only insofar as it is posited as negated and contradictory. Therefore, contradictions must be real and objective.

Hegel claims that all *finite* being and thought is a contradiction and there exists *nothing* without *contradiction,* which is, however, equally sublated (*es nichts gibt, in dem nicht ein Widerspruch existiert, der sich aber freilich ebensosehr aufhebt*) (RI, 473). However, that contradiction is sublated is not the same as that contradiction is an illusion. Hegel is very clear that contradiction is of objective nature, and is the way any reality exists and develops. It is not a mere contradiction in thought, but contradiction in things. It is the *Ansich,* which is contradictory, not simply our thought – contradiction is the way in which reality exists. Thus, "*everything is inherently contradictory,* and in the sense that this law in contrast to the others, expresses rather the truth and the essential nature of things" (WL2, 74; SL, 439).

This insistence on the objectivity of contradiction makes it impossible to identify Hegel's position with Kant's. If, as it is often argued, Hegel proffers only a transcendental ontology similar to that of Kant, then Hegel's enduring criticism of transcendentalism falls apart. Hegel does depict the categories in their "transcendental" purity, and, even more, he ascribes to them the absolute (a supposedly transcendent entity). At the same time, the absolute idealist is much more interested in the coming-to-be of the categories in historical *reality* and, therefore, in their intimate unity with the real world. He demands that the unity of the categories with reality be demonstrated and that contradictions are not mere illusions of reason, but also aspects of reality with which reason is united.

Returning directly to the problem of the logic of thought, the source of contradiction is not a mistaken judgment about things, but the essence of things themselves (provided, of course, that the judgment is "formally" correct). Therefore, the emergence

of a contradiction does not necessarily call for a correction of the concepts that are involved in the judgment simply because contradiction may be the result of arguments that are perfectly valid in their formal aspects. It may not be a mere contradiction in concepts, but a contradiction beyond concepts. Evald Ilyenkov expresses this issue with precision:

> If a contradiction arises of necessity on the theoretical expression of reality from the very course of the investigation, it is not what is called a logical contradiction, though it has the formal signs of such, but is a logically correct expression of reality. On the contrary, the logical contradiction, which there must not be in a theoretical investigation, has to be recognized as a contradiction of terminological, semantic origin and properties. Formal analysis is also obliged to discover such contradictions in determinations; and the principle of contradiction of formal logic applies fully to them. Strictly speaking, it relates to the use of the terms and not to the process of the movement of a concept. The latter is the field of dialectical logic. But there another law is dominant.[138]

Or, as Wolff argues, determinations are not by themselves contradictory but "depend on the internal relations of determinations to specifically determined objects … Their internal relations of opposition are mirrored in the internal contradiction of individual things."[139] For Hegel, it is clear that even if formal claims are correct, this fact by itself does not make them true. They may still lead to contradictions. What is required is a further investigation of the real object, for the determinations of thought are not "external and alien to things" (*den Dingen fremd und äußerlich*) (ENZ1, 81; EL, 56). Thus, the fact that determinations themselves (e.g., formal logical derivations) may not be contradictory does not eliminate the issue of contradiction, but amplifies it. If the object is contradictory, knowledge about the object cannot discard contradictoriness. Logic has to take

138 E.V. Ilyenkov, *Dialectical Logic*, pp. 342–43.
139 M. Wolff, *On Hegel's Doctrine of Contradiction*, p. 19.

contradiction into consideration. Hegel is also categorical on this issue: "But it is one of the fundamental prejudices of logic as hitherto understood and of ordinary thinking, that contradiction is not so characteristically essential and immanent a determination as identity" (WL2, 74; SL, 439).

In one of his earliest essays, Robert Pippin argued that Hegel's charge against the law of contradiction should not be addressed formally, for it represents an attempt to portray the essence of being as becoming by showing that being can accept contradictory predicates.[140] However, splitting every object to "this predicate" and "that predicate," "the one side" and "the other side," etc., constitutes an infinite regress which leads nowhere for *comprehending* the object. For the object is this *and* that *and* that, and so on to infinity. To repeat Hegel's example from the *Phenomenology,* the salt is white, *and* tart, *and* cubic, and an infinite line up of other qualities. This is why Hegel abandons the predication strategy.[141] If contradiction is to be understood, it must be understood as contradiction.

In explaining Hegel's "scandalous" view on contradiction, Hösle draws three points: first, that Hegel accepts the argumentative validity of non-contradiction, second, that he rejects the ontological validity of non-contradiction, and third, that he discerns negative and positive forms of contradiction.[142] If Hegel adopts the first and rejects the second, does it mean that a universe based on contradiction must be understood by a rationality (logic) that does not allow contradiction? This comes to the very core of the argument in this section. That everything is contradictory and that contradiction must be logically expressed does not mean that whatever one says is "abracadabra." The claim that all is contradictory has to be externalized and "ossified" in signs, speech,

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140 R. Pippin, "Hegel's Metaphysics and the Problem of Contradiction," in J. Stewart, ed., *The Hegel Myths and Legends*, pp. 239–52. Pippin's position was later significantly modified, regrettably to the worse. See Pippin R. *Hegel's Idealism*, p. 219.

141 For a criticism of the predication approach, see G. di Giovanni, "Reflection and contradiction: a commentary on some passages of Hegel's *Science of Logic*," in *Hegel Studien* 8 (1973), pp. 131–61.

142 V. Hösle, *Hegels System*, p. 161ff.

language, etc. However, signs are not the same as what they are signs of. The externalization, the utterance, the sign, is ossified and positive. However, what the matter at hand is, is not the same as how the signs about it are operated. The logic of operating the signs as externalizations of thought and the logic of thought itself, its concepts and categories, are not the same. Even the categories themselves, once put down on a piece of paper, must be handled as a collection of signs, and hence "formally." The *form* of Hegel's argument must take into account to the law of non-contradiction, and must not be an abracadabra. This is not the same with the *content* of his argument. The real issue for Hegel and for dialectical logic is not only with definitions, but with the real matter at hand itself. Finally, it is worth reminding once again: reason's claim is not merely A=–A as opposed to A=A, but that A=A and simultaneously –A.

The view advocated by Hegel on thought acknowledges all signs and language operations, all formal aspects that logic deals with (in any primitive or advanced form), but only as sides, aspects of thought, as its operating devices. Therefore, the issue is not to talk or argue contradictorily or to defend nonsense (what Hösle's third point renders as negative form of contradiction), but to demonstrate contradiction as a fundamental ingredient of the matter at hand. This claim pertains to thought in its progression and to things in their existence alike. The issue is to demonstrate contradiction as an inherent property of all that exists.

Dialectical contradiction is thus not the same as formal-logical. Formal logic is directed at linguistic constructions, and the presence of a contradiction therein is examined in terms of its form. But formal calculus is not the task of philosophical logic,[143] unless formal logic is carried back into philosophy and used as the primary methodological device of obtaining truth, as in Neopositivism and not only. It is worth repeating that the identification of logic with language is not without importance for the persistence of the role

143 J. Hyppolite, *Logic and Existence*, 45–53; E.V. Ilyenkov, "Problema Protyvorechya v Logike" ["The Problem of Contradiction in Logic"], in E.V. Ilyenkov, *Filosofia y Kultura*, pp. 308–19; M. Wolff, *On Hegel's Doctrine of Contradiction*, pp. 3, 4, 6.

of formal logic in philosophical discourse. From such an angle, Hegelian writings indeed seem "abracadabra," "pre-scientific", and "absurd."

Once thought is externalized, "stabilized," and ossified in a sign, the calculation of the latter may be addressed by formal rules. But the externalization, the creation of mind, is not the same as mind itself. And the truth is not abstract one-sided fact, but a concrete totality. Contradiction is then a logically correct way of expressing that totality, and that totality *must* be the intellectual portrayal of a *real* object. The position of Jean Piaget is again instructive in this respect. Despite that Hegel and Piaget have many explicit differences, they are also close to each other on several issues, issues which have been drawn out in existing scholarship.[144] These include their mutual focus on activity, their criticism of both empiricism and transcendentalism, and their recognition of both the circularity in the genesis of knowledge and the role of structure in knowledge. At the same time, the notion of structure constitutes a point of substantial difference between the two thinkers. Structure is a totality which Hegel views as an organic whole that transformed from within as a result of internal contradictions. Unlike Hegel, Piaget sees structure as transformed from without, from external stimuli that violate the subject's equilibrium. Thus, contradiction is for Piaget a means of adaptation, and his research is focused on the overcoming of contradiction and re-establishment of equilibrium. (Here one can easily draw parallels with Schelling's insights in the *Weltalter*.) Hegel, on the other hand, focuses precisely on the inevitability and *positive* function of contradiction. He does not view contradiction as a "mistake" but as a normal

144 T. Kesselring, *Entwicklung und Widerspruch. Ein Vergleich zwischen Piagets genetischer Erkenntnistheorie und Hegels Dialektik* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1981), pp. 24ff., 54, 124, etc. A few years later, Kesselring published a sequence to his book which is rather disappointing as he takes a rather analytic approach and examines Hegel's dialectic from the standpoint of formal logic, identifying contradiction with difference and antinomy. See T. Kesselring, *Die Produktivität der Antinomie. Hegels Dialektik im Lichte der genetischen Erkenntnistheorie und der formalen Logik* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1984).

aspect in the development of spirit, as something that dialectical philosophy (as the theory of thought) must address. It must be said, however, that Piaget's ideas on logic and contradiction are neither unequivocal nor static and, as a consequence, deserve explicit commentary.

Early in his career, Piaget took a critical stance toward formal logic. Directly involving himself in the philosophical debates of the 1930s, he attacked Russell and the Vienna Circle for interpreting thought as axiomatic and formal. Can we think, Piaget asks, of a mountain that is 100 feet tall, of a square with unequal angles? This is impossible because our "actions are organized according to their inner rules of consistency, and it is this organizational structure that constitutes the fact of positive thought corresponding to what is called, on the axiomatic level, the 'principle of contradiction.' " In other words, logic is not the presupposition of thought but its practical outcome, "logic is a mirror of thought, and not vice-versa."[145] Therefore, "logical axiomatic schematizes the real work of the mind after it has occurred."[146] In 1942 when this was written, it is doubtful whether Piaget knew that he was repeating, almost verbatim, not only Hegel's, but also Fichte's and early Schelling's thoughts, and was pointing to the difference between Kant and Fichte on what the *Canon* of thought is as different from the *Organon*.

Piaget's position became more intricate toward the end of his long career, in the 1970s, when he experimentally examined the issue of contradiction.[147] He justified his research by paralleling it to H. Poincare's designation of contradiction in physical continuity ($A=B$, $B=C$, but nevertheless $A<C$), to Heisenberg's Indeterminacy Principle, Einstein's relativity, and several others. Seeking to determine the role of contradiction in psychology, Piaget dramatically changed the emphasis of his equilibrium theory and tended to endorse contradiction as the

145 J. Piaget, *The Psychology of Intelligence*, p. 27.
146 *Ibid.*, p. 31.
147 J. Piaget, *Experiments in Contradiction*, trans. D. Coltman (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1974).

primary constituent of cognitive activity. According to Piaget's modified concept, contradiction amounts to the creation of a cognitive disequilibrium that results in incomplete compensation between affirmations and negations concerning the object at hand. The solution of contradiction restores equilibrium. However, the equilibrium is by no means permanent; it is only a transitory point, a moment that is transcended in the next moment of problem solving.[148] Piaget also distinguished formal logical from dialectical contradiction. Characterizing the latter as "praxeological or cognitive,"[149] he pointed out that "the oppositions arising from disequilibriums are exclusively dependent upon the contents of action or thought."[150] In that, the great scientist grasped a very substantial aspect of the development of contradiction, namely, the arena of activity and the dependence of form on content. It is none other than Hegel who, elaborating Fichte's insights, has placed exceptional emphasis on these issues.

I have argued on many occasions that Hegel simultaneously explores logic and metaphysics – his *Science of Logic* clearly pertains to both these fields. However, Hegel's *Logic* is not only an inwardly articulated onto-logic. It is also a praxeological theory, an elucidation of the distinctiveness of thought as active and creative. The pure (transcendental) categories are indeed "built-in" to human rationality, yet, they are neither innate nor unequivocally *a priori*. Nor are the categories (much against Hegel's own intention) counterparts to a mystical absolute spirit. They result from subjective purposive activity and the ideal images it produces in order to cope with the contradictions of reality. These ideal images represent the "reflection of the external world in the forms of man's activity, in the forms of his consciousness and will."[151] The *differentia specifica* of purposive human activity is that the activity is mediated by the ideal representation of the

148 Cf. on that T. Kesselring, *Entwicklung und Widerspruch*, p. 177ff.
149 J. Piaget, *Experiments in Contradiction*, pp. xiv, xv, 286.
150 *Ibid.*, pp. xvi.
151 E.V. Ilyenkov, *Dialectical Logic*, p. 252.

final product. As Marx once wrote, what positively distinguishes the worst architect from the best bee is that the architect ideally constructs the image of his object in his head before acting.

Not only does the subject (ontogenetically and phylogenetically) actively move through contradictions, it formats the mechanism to handle them. The subject acquires the potential to think-act through contradictions, and the subjective judgment applies the dialectical categorical apparatus. Thus, the mind learns to combine contradictions, to correlate the particular to the universal, to treat the particular as universal and the finite as infinite, to penetrate from the being (immediacy) of its object to its essence, to understand the object as unity of inner and outer, etc. In other words, it is in real social and historical praxis that the laws of identity and non-contradiction are denied, and not in the isolated, solidified devices and products of that praxis. Thought is externalized in language and materialized in all forms and monuments of human civilization. These, however, do not exhaust the specificity of thought, and neither do the neurophysiological functions of the individual brain as the material carrier of thought. Thought must be addressed at a meta-level, as simultaneous ontogenetic and phylogenetic activity. This is precisely what Hegel does. The great dialectician uncovers and scrutinizes the active power of the human mind and its dialectic in both ontogenetic and phylogenetic dimensions. At the same time, Hegel idolizes and literally *deifies* this power, identifying it with the divine *Λόγος*. Such is the angle from which the issue of Hegel's "demystification" is viewed in the current treatise. The greatness of Hegel's thought should not overshadow his limitations, and nor the reverse: the metaphysical facet of his philosophy should not lead to his wholesale renunciation. For Hegel's idealism did not prevent, but rather facilitated his portrayal of the categorical dialectical apparatus of thought and made possible his positive exposition of contradiction, that is, his designation of contradiction as the source of any development.

Commenting on the role of contradiction in Hegel's *Logic,* Puntel rightfully observes that in "contradiction one must understand and thematize as a *pure* determination, as a *structural*

measure (*Große*) and not simply as an operational measure."[152] Contradiction must be addressed *qua* contradiction at a meta-logical level. The difficulty, however, is that that contradiction as "structural" particularity is nowhere to be found except in real praxis and history, emerging as contradiction in the real, which is equally contradiction in the historical. Comprehending thought as activity, thought as unified with its externalizations, Hegel comes to redefine the scope of logic by incorporating therein the real basis for the forms and laws of thought, i.e., the historical process of their evolution.

The categories are a characteristic of intelligence, of thinking, but are not explained on the basis of thinking *alone*. Neither does so the so-called "absolute idealist" Hegel, who is a fierce critic of transcendentalism. For him, all the content of the mental sphere exists in the sphere of reality; it is an independent and outside of consciousness entity, but is:

> to an equal extent immediately transformed and given an *ideal* nature as a determinateness of my feeling; what I contain is the same as that outside me, it is merely its form which is different (ENZ2, 465; PN2, 137).

At the same time, the betrayal of reality that Hegel's idealism conveys is significant: real human activity puts forth constantly new problems and contradictions, and it is not merely the form, but also the content which is different. This is why, in turn, it is significant to address Hegel also "from below," not only "from above," that is, from the starting point of his system and not from the end. Moreover, it has been argued that the real beginning of dialectic goes back to Kant's and Fichte's interpretation of reason. In their interpretation, reason lacks both the intersubjective dimension and the elaborate dialectic that Hegel adds to that faculty. However, Kantian and Fichtean finite reason is far from being identified with the absolute.

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152 Puntel, *Verstand und Vernunft in Hegels Wissenschaft der Logik*, p. 240.

Dialectical logic is a metalogical theory, a categorical theory which demands unity between thought and object, yet not an ahistorical ontology which describes the ultimate and unchangeable features of the universe. Neither does dialectical logic advocate an externally grasped "totality" as proffered in analytic holism, in the so-called systems approach,[153] and other similar doctrines.

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153 Ludwig von Bertalanffy, *General System Theory. Foundations, Development, Applications,* rev. ed. (New York: George Brazilier, 1969). Bertalanffy claims to overcome "the limitations of analytical procedures in science" (pp. 18, 45, 48), as well as non-empirical science and philosophical speculation (p. 100). He professes to represent a contemporary reorientation of scientific thinking toward holism. Knowledge is thus properly understood as a complex network of interactions, as a totality of totalities, which is described by specific system theories that may be integrated in general system theory. The aim is to describe complexities, wholes that are "controlled by the laws of the superordinate whole" (p. 53). Finding applications in various scientific fields such as thermodynamics, kinetics, and physical theory, systems approach claims to represent a credible attempt to put an end to the infinite split of sciences into innumerable disciplines.

Some aspects of systems theory are truly striking. Systems theory admits that progress is characterized "by passing from a state of undifferentiated wholeness to a differentiation of parts," while at the same time, "progressive segregation also means progressive mechanization," which results in a "regulability," which can be described by systems theory (p. 70). Perhaps the most striking of all is that systems theory manages to show through mathematical equations that the system behaves as a whole in which the changes of every part depend on the changes of the others (p. 66ff.), and vice-versa. With the change of some variables, the behavior of the parts changes too.

One can question systems theory to the extent to which its claims are philosophical. First of all, in terms of procedure, the entire approach is of an axiomatic nature (p. 55); it is deliberately formal and based on mathematical models of various complexities. It is thus unreflective, and non-cognitive in the philosophical sense. It is a rather descriptive method, without true explanatory potential, describing but not comprehending motion and complexity in the same fashion in which the theory of probability makes order out of chaos. Thus, the notion of truth is set aside and sublated by statistical approximations. Universal formulas

Dialectical logic is a categorical theory of mind (ordinary and scientific, ontogenetic and phylogenetic) as emerging in historical reality, understanding, coping with, transforming, and actively creating reality. Insofar as that discipline is dialectical *logic,* it is an exposition of *concepts.* Needless to repeat, this theory equals an immanent explanation of the essentiality of the object as it historically develops.

Dialectical logic is thus a categorical logic that proceeds immanently with its object and can be demonstrated from within the object itself. It cannot be an external set of rules, but an exposition

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mean the rejection of the specificity of the truth of each form. They represent abstract generalities, and, for Hegel's dialectic, abstract generalities are the result of the understanding; and the examination of these generalities is the field of formal logical operations.

Systems theory calls for "abandoning substance" (see Schlosser G. *Einheit der Welt und Einheitswissenschaft. Grundlegung einer allgemeinen Systemtheorie.* Wiesbaden: Vieweg, 1990, pp. 68–81). According to Bertalanffy, "speaking philosophically, general systems theory, in its developed form, would replace what is known as 'theory of categories' by an exact system of logico-mathematical laws" (*ibid.*, pp. 85–6). Moreover, "recent developments in mathematics even allow to submit "free will" – apparently the philosophical problem most resistant to scientific analysis – to mathematical examination" (*ibid.*, p. 114).

To the extent that systems theory's claims are deliberately philosophical, it conveys an intimidating understanding of humanity and the phenomenon of science. The latter is understood as developing independently of, and overwhelming, human agency. It is argued in this mode that science advances toward "progressive de-anthropomorphization," that is, progressive elimination of "those rules which are due to specifically human experience" like forms of intuition and categories. They are "all too human" (242ff.). Such claim is advanced despite the acknowledgement of the opposite, that "in a way, progressive de-anthropomorphization is like Muenchhausen pulling himself out of the quagmire on its own pigtail" (p. 244). For more on this approach, see W. Gray, and N.Rizzo, eds., *Unity through Diversity: a Festschrift for Ludwig von Bertalanffy*, 2 vols. (New York, Gordon and Breach Science Publishers, 1973); G.J. Klir, ed., *Trends in General Systems Theory* (New York: Wiley-Interscience, 1972); E. Laszlo, *The Systems View of the World* (New York: George Brazilier, 1972).

of *die Sache selbst.* Therefore, dialectical logic may only be the logic *of,* not logic in general. Heidegger can hardly be counted as an advocate of dialectical logic, but he has expressed this aspect with exceptional precision:

> Certainly, "dialectic" is a magnificent thing. But one never finds *the* dialectic, as if it were a mill which exists somewhere and into which one empties whatever once chooses, or whose mechanism one could modify according to taste and need. Dialectic stands and falls with *the matter itself,* just as Hegel took it up as the matter of philosophy.[154]

Other than the above, dialectic *is,* but is intuitive and partial, and remains therefore prey to the attacks of the understanding. Such is the complexity of the issue. If a "set of rules" is set forth, dialectic becomes external to its object, formal, *a priori*, and ossified, and relapses into formal logic. In this context, it is possible to discern the historical intricacy between the attempt to locate Hegel's dialectical logic, on the one hand, and the negation of such logic, on the other. Many commentators of Hegel, especially Marxists, were unwillingly driven to such a dead end: if dialectic is "extracted" from its object, it becomes an externally gathered conglomerate, a *Sammlung* that lies next to, and above, its material. Such comprehension is formal, stationary, and unproductive. It relapses into the logic of the understanding and lacks rigor compared to modern formal logic. This situation generates disappointment and the project of dialectical logic rejected *in toto.*

Hegel's *Logic* can be read as a dialectical exposition of formatted thought in both its logical and historical aspects and, thus, as a dialectical logic. It must also be underlined that only when thought has been formatted, it becomes possible to discern and concretely handle contradictions. On its upward, formatting trajectory, thought (in its ontogenetic, phylogenetic, and scientific dimensions alike) develops though contradictions. Contradictions are therefore called contradictions because they cannot be predicted or foreseen. But, contradictions can be only retrospectively

154 M. Heidegger, *Hegel's Phenomenology of Spirit*, p. 112.

recollected and, in that sense, only once the totality has been formatted, its dialectical exposition becomes possible. Similarly, only when scientific thought has matured, does it become capable of retrospectively grasping its own evolution and logic. Once again, logical and historical approaches converge. There arise therefore two new questions: first, whether dialectic is the matter of philosophy alone; second, what is the relation between philosophy (the universal) and other sciences (the particular). These will both be treated in the final section of this work.

II. Toward an Epistemological Totality

A. *The Principle of Hegel's Relation to the Sciences*

That, for Hegel, logic is ontology, and that finite spirit comes out of nature, can be seen in his structuring of the *Encyclopedia*. First, there is the *Logic* as the absolute structure, then the *Philosophy of Nature* in which the absolute posits itself in its otherness and, finally, the *Philosophy of Mind* (in which the absolute becomes for-itself) as the evolution of nature toward spirit. Spirit views its own self in nature, is not reducible to nature but emerges *from* nature. Hegel's *absolute* idealism cannot, therefore, be external to nature. The absolute presupposes its otherness, and spirit assumes nature as the domain in which spirit can be actualized. An absolute external to nature could hardly count as absolute. Thus, there is a *need* for natural philosophy in the Hegelian system, and the *Philosophy of Nature* plays therein a vital, illuminating role.[155]

Taken out of the general context of his idealism, many of Hegel's arguments create a deceptive impression about the philosopher's negative attitude toward external reality, neglect for natural scientific research and the role of dialectic therein. For instance, in a well-known passage of the *Phenomenology*, Hegel claims that organic nature has no history, it is made up only of particulars: "But the organic nature has no history; it falls from its universal, from life, directly into the singleness of existence,

155 See esp. V. Hösle, *Hegels System*, p. 277ff.

and the moments … produce the process of becoming merely as a contingent movement" (PG, 225; PS, 178-9). In the *Philosophy of Nature,* Hegel writes that "Nature begins with quantity, not quality" (ENZ2, 42; PN1, 224). Does the philosopher imply that a tree is only some quantity of leaves and branches? Is a stone an aggregate of atoms, electrons, and so on, down to infinite regress? Eventually, does Hegel have in mind nature *per se* or the singularity of it being experienced? Moreover, if his negligence of nature is real, why should Hegel alone be charged with that? For even Schelling, an undisputed natural philosopher, finds it possible to claim that "matter is said to be without self, precisely because it has no inwardness, and is apprehended only in the intuition of another."[156]

For both Schelling and Hegel, nature by itself is unimportant. What is sought *through* nature is the ultimate answer(s) of *πρώτη φιλοσοφία* that both thinkers are occupied with. Necessarily, thus, nature (*φύσις*) and knowledge about it (*φυσική γνώσις*) are addressed by them as meta-physics (*μετα-φυσική*). But this does not exhaust their approach. It is not nature *per se,* not real nature, but rather *matter,* the negative pole of creation, the Platonic *ύλη,* what is the target of their contempt. Moreover, matter is in their systems simply a principle, a *nicht seiendes Sein,* an actually non-existent essence, which is nowhere to be found. Contrary to such a principle, at any degree of actuality there exists dialectic. Both Schelling and Hegel are sure about that, and Hegel specifically emphasizes the fact that identity exists only *insofar as* there exists difference. In that sense, both *ύλη* and *ιδέα* are equally empty *potencies,* and they can be found only in their unity and opposition.

Therefore, for Hegel nature must exist, must be real, must have its own essence, must be itself purposive[157] and not be merely formal. To say that there is no dialectic of nature in Hegel

156 "Die Materie heißt eben deswegen selbstlos, weil sie kein Inneres hat, und ein in fremder Anschauung Begriffenes ist." See Schelling, STI, 368.

157 See D. O. Dahlstrom, "Hegel's Appropriation of Kant's Account of Teleology," in S. Houlgate, *Hegel and the Philosophy of Nature* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1998), pp. 167–88.

means to hold onto the standpoint of Fichte, who discards the object and leaves nature as the absolute object which never posits itself. This would be to disagree with Hegel's endorsement of Schelling's criticism of Kant: "Outside what is objectively determined by the categories there remained an enormous empirical realm of sensibility and perception, an absolute *a posteriori* realm" (DZ, 10; Diff., 80-1). For the treatment of this *a posteriori* realm, Hegel praises Schelling over Fichte: "In the System of Nature ... the ideal determinations nature receives in science, are also immanent in it" ... "Nature is an immanent ideality just as intelligence is an immanent reality" (DZ, 100, 107; Diff., 160, 166). To discard Hegel's dialectic of nature means to discard Hegel's natural philosophy that was written early on, already in the 1804/5 Jena version of his *Encyclopedia*. Moreover, such an approach discards Schelling (who sought to inquire into how intelligence comes *out of nature*) from the narrative, and ignores the fact that Hegel criticizes Schelling's *articulation,* the portrayal of the absolute as a "shot from a pistol" rather than Schelling's metaphysical system.

In the *Phenomenology,* Hegel terms "empty idealism" the attempt to sustain the spiritual separately from the real and insists on finding the one *in* the other. By forcing the unity between the ideal and the real, Hegel cannot be qualified as a traditional idealist.[158] For reason does not *impose* its rationality on nature, but finds in the rationality of nature the degrees of nature's own *εντελέχεια*. Even if one emphasizes Hegel's metaphysical idealism, to say that there is no dialectic *in* nature is not the same as saying that there is no dialectic *of* nature.[159] The dialectical exposition of spirit's

158 W. Maker has recently even claimed that Hegel is not an idealist at all. See W. Maker, "The Very Idea of the Idea of Nature, or Why Hegel is not an Idealist," in S. Houlgate, *op. cit.*, pp. 1–27.

159 Even in I. A. Ilin's Christian-theological reading, in which matter is identical to evil, Hegel has to retreat from his principle and admit the reality of nature: "The attempt to philosophically *substantiate* the transition from the absolute to the relative, put Hegel face to face precisely with the revolt of chaos." (I.A. Ilin, *Filosofia Gegelia*, p. 206). Ilin is forced to admit that in the cosmological sense, once the *Logic* is followed by

marching in the natural realm *de facto* occupies a very large part of Hegel's system. That Hegel (not only Schelling) attempted various revisions of his natural system speaks only of the difficulty of the task and of the inevitable relativity of the outcome and by no means does it speak of any neglect of nature.

On the cover of the *Phenomenology,* Hegel announces himself as a member of a mineralogical society. His interest in the concrete sciences is far from being ephemeral. Several years later, in a letter to Paulus dated July 30, 1814, Hegel writes:

> You know that I have occupied myself too much not only with ancient literature but also with mathematics and recently with higher analysis, differential calculus, physics, natural history, [and] chemistry to be affected by that humbug in natural philosophy which consists in philosophizing without [wide] knowledge by the [sole] power of imagination, and in regarding empty brainstorms born of conceit as thoughts (LT: 309).

Hegel makes it clear that the insights of philosophy must not only correspond to those of other sciences, including natural science, but also that philosophy must draw on the discoveries of those sciences. Natural philosophy, being grounded on the evidence of natural science, aims at an organic portrayal of nature. Here is how Hegel puts the issue:

> What is now called *physics,* was formerly called *natural philosophy.* It is, what is more, a *theoretical,* and indeed *thinking* consideration of nature, and while on the one hand, it does concerns itself with determinations such as these purposes, which are external to nature, on the other hand it does aim at comprehending the *universal* of nature as it presents itself in a *determinate* form, i.e., forces, laws, genera. Here the content is not a simple aggregate, but is distributed through orders and classes, and must be regarded as an organic whole. In that the philosophy of nature is a comprehending consideration (*begreifende Betrachtung*), its object is that same

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the *Philosophy of Nature,* "the Idea returns not to *science of thought, but to nature*" (p. 209).

> *universal;* it is however, the universal *for itself,* which it regards in its *own immanent necessity,* according to the self-determination of the Concept (EZN2, 15; PN1, 196-97).

The invariable structures of rationality that Hegel had identified and deified mediate the approach to nature. At the same time, Hegel's dialectic demands that the beginning of knowledge is not "external to nature," and thus, the genesis and formation of philosophy has empirical science as its presupposition. Hegel sees the beginning from the standpoint of the result, but he at once grants the necessity of the beginning. Only the *truth* makes up the *differentia specifica* of the result, and at the same time, the truth is the result *and* the process taken together, so that "truth in philosophy means that concept and external reality correspond" (R, 73; PR., 231).

Thus, the manifold of experience, the *εμπειρία,* formats both a necessary as well as insufficient condition of knowledge. For philosophy "the point of departure is experience," but philosophy refuses to surrender to the given. Reflecting over the given, philosophy provides the empirical sciences with their *a priori* character so that their evidence "no longer depends on facts so found and so experienced" (ENZ1, 55ff; EL, 28ff). For Hegel, what is important is not only the intuition but also the spiritual construction. To recall Kant, it is not only important how the manifold is given, but also the way it is *thought.* Thus, Hegel tells us, "no science is brought about by intuition, but only by *thinking*" (WL2, 535; SL, 813). Science is *thought* about the empirical manifold. At the same time, the reach of *a priori* philosophy can only be discovered by empirical observation. Hegel's "*a priorism*" is a "quasi-*a priorism*" it is a pure structure that can be conceived purely only insofar as it is impure.

Therefore, what Hegel criticizes is not natural science *per se,* but its empirical level, its reductionism, which is as common to 21st century science[160] as it was to Hegel's contemporary science. The philosopher's

160 See, for example, the characteristic call of the Nobel Prize winner S. Weinberg "Two Cheers for Reductionism," in S. Weinberg, *Dreams of a Final Theory* (New York: Bantam, 1992), pp. 51–64.

dissatisfaction has to do with the inability of empirical science to supply adequate analysis of the concepts it employs, remaining, thus, an abstract and non-reflective enterprise that does not account for its development and contradictions. Empirical science cannot avoid the issue of conceptualization; it just ignores it, or takes it for granted. Thus, "formal thinking does in fact think contradiction, only it at once looks away from it, and in saying that it is unthinkable it merely passes over from it into abstract negation" (WL2, 563; SL, 835). The fundamental deception of scientific empiricism is that it assumes metaphysical categories, but makes use "of those categories and their connections in a totally uncritical and unconscious manner." Empiricism exaggerates analysis, formalism, and self-identity, breaking the object down "like an onion whose skins we peel off," Hegel writes. But in the formation of one-sided and empty abstractions "the living thing is killed" (ENZ1, 109.; EL, 78).

The lack of self-awareness pertains to all assumptions of empiricism, its conflicts and anomalies, as well as to the social context within which empiricism develops. As the friction produced by the need of reflection on these issues generates anew the significance of dialectic, the unavoidably recurring revival of interest in Hegelian philosophy[161] is a revengeful reminder of Hegel's authenticity.

The analysis of "what is living and what is dead" in Hegel's *Philosophy of Nature,* is not the objective of the present discussion.[162]

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161 See R.J. Bernstein, "Why Hegel Now?," in *Review of Metaphysics*, 31, September 1977; See also Bernstein's discussion of the post-empirical scientific paradigm in R.J. Bernstein, *Beyond Objectivism and Relativism*, pp. 51–108; On Hegel's *Logic* as arguing for the emancipation from the empirical paradigm, see N.V. Motroshilova, *Put' Gegelia k Nauke Logiki*, p. 324ff.

162 During the recent decades, there has been a revival of interest in Hegel's, otherwise neglected, *Philosophy of Nature.* For defenses and accounts of his predictive insights, see J. Burbidge, "New Directions in Hegel's Philosophy of Nature", in K. Deligiorgi, ed., *Hegel: New Directions* (Chesham, UK: Acumen, 2006), pp. 177–92; E. Renault, *Hegel: La Naturalization de la Dialectique* (Paris: Vrin, 2000); D. Wandschneider, *Raum, Zeit und Relativität: Grundbestimmungen der Physik in der Perspektive der Hegelschen Naturphilosophie* (Frankfurt a.M.: Vittorio Klostermann, 1982); V. Hösle, *Hegels System*, pp. 277–346; J. Burbidge, *Real Process: How Logic*

What I wish to emphasize is the principle of correspondence between the Hegelian dialectic and the natural realm. As it concerns the *content* of Hegel's work, his genuine insights could not but be distorted by his insistence on circular formalism and, above all, by the data available during his lifetime. Moreover, one should not forget the principal *philosophical* character of Hegel's considerations. The philosopher does not elaborate on natural science as such, but discusses precisely the *principles* that outline the contact with nature. From the height of modern scientific advances, Hegel's natural philosophy is frequently discarded *in toto*. However, as V. Hösle rightfully wonders,[163] if one applies such nihilistic criticism against Hegel's *Philosophy of Nature,* why does one not do the same toward Aristotle's *Physics*? What the thorough rejection of Hegel's position shows is only the powerfulness of his influence. Far from being alien to reality and nature, Hegel's philosophy is *in principle* relevant to all fields of inquiry, and these fields hypothetically draw smaller circles within what the philosopher calls the circle of circles of absolute knowing.[164]

B. *The Circles Within the Circle*

Thought is able to represent the object dialectically only when that object has reached its maturity, and "the owl of Minerva can spread its wings." Hegel's circular argumentation is directed

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and Chemistry Combine in Hegel's Philosophy of Nature (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996); R.-P. Horstmann, and M. J. Petry, eds., *Hegels Philosophie der Natur* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1986); H. Paolucci, „Hegel, Newton and Einstein," in R.S. Cohen, and M.W. Wartofsky, eds., *Hegel and the Sciences*, pp. 55–85; M.J. Petry, ed. *Hegel und die Naturwissenschaften* (Stuttgart: Frommann – Holzboog, 1987); E.E. Harris, "How Final Is Hegel's Rejection of Evolution?," in S. Houlgate, ed., *Hegel and the Philosophy of Nature*, pp. 189–208; H. Kainz, *Hegel* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1996), p. 90ff.; S.S. Stepelevich, "Hegel's Geometric Theory," in S. Houlgate, *op. cit.*, pp. 71–95; A. Stone, *Petrified Intelligence: Nature in Hegel's Philosophy* (New York: SUNY Press, 2005).

163 V. Hösle, *Hegels System*, p. 280.

164 See the discussion in D. Wandschneider, *Grundzüge einer Theorie der Dialektik*, p. 166ff.

"backwards." Only the subsequent broader view shows the narrowness of the previous. On this account, a *formatted* totality demonstrates contradictions as fully elaborated and fully justified, and a *coming-to-be* totality can reveal contradictions as internal to the totality at both micro- and macro-levels. For every particular is universal, and vice-versa. Every tiny part in the universe is a totality. Hegel spells out this idea in the *Logic* by saying that for conceptual consciousness, "the object is not a merely essence-like, but inherently universal unity, not only containing real distinctions, but containing them as totalities in itself" (ENZ1, 346; EL, 257). What is sought, therefore, is that the object of any field of human knowledge is portrayed as a universal, as an evolving contradictory whole.

In Hegel's logicism, any natural science, as well as the philosophy of nature, cannot be explained on its own account, but only on the basis of the *Logic*. The reason is that each particular natural discipline is sublated in the broader circle of philosophy of nature, and philosophy of nature itself is sublated within the broader structure of the *Logic*. However, the *Logic* as absolute structure returns only into itself.[165] At the same time, the general structure is diffused in the particular structures and expressed solely therein. Hegel's emphasis on the former is grounded on his metaphysical objectives; it consequently undermines the dynamic autonomy of particular sciences. The philosopher becomes formalistic, and he delineates a scheme which is circularly applicable to any structure.[166]

Indeed, there is a deep-seated inconsistency in Hegel's logic, namely, in that his depiction of the structure of scientific thought is carried out *in general*, whereas thought is always concretely unified with its object.[167] This inconsistency is counterbalanced by the

165 E. Harper, "The Logic of Hegel's Philosophy of Nature," in S. Houlgate, *op. cit.*, pp. 29–49.

166 Such objection goes as back as B. Croce's criticism. See B. Croce, *What is Living and What is Dead in the Philosophy of Hegel*, p. 78ff.; For a more recent criticism, see G. di Giovanni, "On the Organic in Hegel's Philosophy of Nature," in R.S. Cohen, M.W. Wartofsky, eds., *op. cit.*, pp. 101–7.

167 Friedrike Schick argues that even on its own terms, Hegel's *Logic* is inconsistent with metaphysics and it must be broken down to particular

fact that Hegel aims at portraying represents the categories of the absolute. As such, they can have only absolute applicability, and thus, the *Science of Logic* emerges as a universal science.[168] What for Hegel is a universal formula, for realistic rational science is an immanent procedure. Dialectic must always be tested and modified on concrete material. The Hegelian portrayal of absolute knowing and its dispersal of in the object, designate for realistic epistemology the life and contradictory nature of the concrete scientific object, a concrete field of human knowledge that is portrayed in scientific categories.

This is what logic as the science of *thought* has to present, namely, that the concept of the object of science is dialectical. At the same time, dialectical is not the concept alone, but the concept of the scientific object, a real object. For Hegel, the dialectic culminates in absolute knowing, which equals knowledge of the absolute, of God. Contrary to that, the only temporarily "indifferent to its differences" universal that dialectical epistemology may acknowledge concerns the results of systematic science. The one-sidedness of those results will be revealed by a future, broader and more fundamental, scientific exposition. The universal of science is therefore a conditional universal which, based on the relevance of reason's systematic skills to non-metaphysical objects, portrays *really existing* totalities in their internal articulation and contradictory unity.

It would be unfair to universalize the criticism of Hegel. For in the philosopher's system, only the particular structures form the real material for the more general structure. Thus, real material can be conceptualized and totalized, before being integrated into the broader totality. In this sense, Hegel tells us:

> Science exhibits itself as a circle returning upon itself ....; moreover, this circle is a *circle of circles,* for each individual member as ensouled

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fields or "regional ontologies". See F. Schick, *Hegels Wissenschaft der Logik: metaphysische Letztbegründung oder Theorie logischen Formen?* (München: Karl Alber, 1994).

168 Cf. E. Fleischmann, *La science universelle ou la logique de Hegel* (Paris: Libraire Pron, 1968).

> by the method is reflected into itself, so that in returning to the beginning is at the same time the beginning of a new member. Links of this chain are the individual sciences [of logic, nature and spirit], each of which has an *antecedent* and a *successor* (WL2, 571-572; SL, 842).

The universal science is not a single circle, but a circle of circles. It is, thus, possible that any science reaches its totality, yet the procedure is immanent, not the result of externally imposed rules. Only science (any science) that is self-reflective upon its own content and history can demonstrate the dialectical contradictory spirals that Hegel demonstrates in general in the *Logic*. Such an exposition is the result of the immanent development of science itself and denotes its maturity, the reach of its rational (*vernünftig*) level. This self-reflecting, *theoretical* science acknowledges its own logic of development.[169] Thus, the categorical exposition is the result of a self-critical view of this science's history, and amounts to the portrayal of that science as an *organic* whole in its totality of determinations. That whole would count as *temporarily* "indifferent to its differences" (WL2, 194; SL, 536), as absolute content. However, this temporarily consistent exposition will subsequently break down in its own contradictions and be sublated by a broader one in the further development of cognition.

It is important to emphasize once again that the *logic* of investigation can be expressed only in categories, and, at the same time, these categories portray a real object. Therefore, the subordination of categories of each science cannot be predicted in advance. Reality sets forth new contradictions and reveals new ways of its (self) structuring. Although Hegel would have endorsed this argument, for him the categories can have only one way of subordination. In his defense, it must be said that the great dialectician examines in the *Logic* only the final circle of circles; however, if one wants to avoid metaphysics and remain attached to the real, historically given object, it must be *the object* that determines the structure of the mind while mind portrays the object.

The argument here is to the greatest extent still merely a possibility. Its actuality can be demonstrated only in the process and

169 Cf. V. Hösle, *Hegels System*, p. 311.

results of concrete investigations. Although indulging into detailed considerations of such approach is not the objective of the present work, I will briefly discuss a known but dramatically misapprehended example. The display of reason's dialectical skills on a real object was demonstrated in the exposition of the categories of political economy in Marx's *Capital*. That work remains until today the only deliberate, immanent, and rigorous exposition of a concrete contradictory totality from the standpoint of dialectical logic. In Marx's analysis, the one commodity is contradictory to the other and, thus, to itself. The one appears as the expression of value, the other as the expression of use value. But both must play *both roles at the same time,* for value for the one is use value for the other, and vice versa. Further, Marx says that if in the process of commodity exchange the exchanged products are equivalent, then there is no surplus value. If the products are not equivalent, then again there is no surplus value. Further, the appearance of surplus value can be located neither within the sphere of production alone nor within the circulation of the capital alone, but *simultaneously in both*. Further, Marx splits labor itself into two aspects, abstract and concrete labor, each mutually excluding the other, and mutually presupposing each other *in one and the same relationship*. Marx's examples are numerous. The dialectic of the *Capital* is multileveled and my objective here is only to *point* at such dialectic, not to discuss it in detail. And it must also be clear that the *Capital* by itself offers neither a general theory of social being, nor a theory of social revolution. The *Capital* represents *an investigation of a concrete science, a concrete field of knowledge, the political economy of capitalist production*. This science, in Marx's well-known admission, had matured enough to be presented dialectically. Marx's own ideological endeavors (which where magnified by later scholarship) present a different problem, and it is required in my argument that Marx's own utopian expectations are kept separate from his rigorous exposition in the *Capital*.

The *Capital* has been convincingly shown to be one of the most fundamental Hegelian works after Hegel. Systematically revealed by some Hegelians in the former USSR[170] (most of

170 For some of the best samplings, see the new editions of E.V. Ilyenkov, *Dialektika Abstraktnovo i Konkretnovo v Nauchno-Teoreticheskom Myshlenii* [*The*

them unknown in the West due to their clashes with the Soviet orthodoxy), later in German bibliography,[171] and in the English-speaking bibliography during the past two decades,[172] the

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Dialectics of the Abstract and the Concrete in Scientific-Theoretical Thought] (Moscow: Politisdat, 1997); V.A. Vazyulin, *Logika 'Kapitala' K. Marksa* [*The Logic of Marx's "Capital"*], 2nd ed., (Moscow: RGU, 2002). In particular, already in the late '60s, Vazuylin had shown that Marx's *thought* reproduces, in a triple spiral, the movement of Hegel's *Logic*: from being to essence and then to phenomenon and actuality. A similar approach was advanced by M. Theunissen about a decade later: "Bedeutsamer ist, daß die im Kapital dargestellte Kritik der politischen Ökonomie tatsächlich von der Oberfläche, auf welcher der Reichtum kapitalistisch organisierten Gesellschaften als eine „ungeheure Warnsammlung" erscheint, in die Tiefe der „Substanz" sich zurückbewegt, als die sich ihr die menschliche Arbeit enthüllt, und erst aus dieser Tiefe wieder zur Oberfläche einer Erscheinung aufsteigt, die von ihr her als Schein durchschaut werden kann. Es war zweifellos das Hegelsche System, dem Marx diese Bewegung nachgebildet hat" (M. Theunissen, *Sein und Schein*, p. 142). See also the approach of H. Uchida in his examination of the *Grundrisse*. [H. Uchida, *Marx's Grundrisse and Hegel's Logic*, ed. T. Carver, (New York: Routledge, 1988)]. A recent (more analytically minded) exposition of the same problematic is found in I. Hanzel, *The Concept of Scientific Law in the Philosophy of Science and Epistemology* (Boston: Kluwer, 1999).

171 For some good discussion, see R. Bubner, *Dialektik und Wissenschaft* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp 1973), pp. 44–88. H. J. Krahl, "Bemerkungen zum Verhältnis von Kapital und Hegelscher Wesenslogik," in O. Negt, ed., *Aktualität und Folgen der Philosophie Hegels* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp 1971), pp. 141–54; F. Kuhne, *Begriff und Zitat bei Marx. Die idealistische Struktur des Kapitals und ihre nicht idealistische Darstellung* (Lüneburg: zu Klampen, 1995); R. Meiners, *Methodenprobleme bei Marx und ihr Bezug zur Hegelschen Philosophie* (München: Minerva, 1980); G. Quass, *Dialektik als Philosophische Theorie und Methode des Kapital* (Frankfurt am Main: P. Lang, 1992); J. Zeleny, *Wissenschaftslogik und 'Das Kapital'* (Frankfurt am Main: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1973).

172 M.E. Meaney, *The Role of Hegel's Science of Logic in Marx's* Grundrisse (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1998); F. Moseley, ed., *Marx's Method in Capital: a Reexamination* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press International, 1993); T. Smith, *The Logic of Marx's 'Capital'. Reply to Hegelian Criticisms.* (New York: SUNY Press, 1987); H. Uchida, *Marx's Grundrisse*

Hegelianism of Marx's *opus magnum* is now universally acknowledged. Marx's critical attitude notwithstanding, it is not accurate to say that Marx is only "critical," for he is also conscientiously rigorous and positive. More precisely, as a Hegelian, Marx is *both* positive and critical.[173] By elaborating Hegel's insights, well ahead of his time Marx advanced a fresh way of understanding the scientific enterprise. He investigated a concrete field of human knowledge (a concrete science, the political economy of capitalist production) as a totality of inner contradictory relationships, and exposed its inner source of development. Thus, Marx created a valuable guide for opening the path of other inquiries. His view comes against the common fetishism in the perception of science, according to which science develops independently of social needs and is not determined by social norms, like Baron Münchhausen, who manages to get out of the swamp by pulling his own pigtail.[174] And it is unfortunate that the still-prevalent political-ideological interpretation of Marxism overshadows the appreciation of Marx's epistemological advance. Moreover, in those rare cases that the dialectical advance is discussed, the discussion comes from within traditional Marxism and aims at justifying *ipso facto* the rest of Marx's claims. As is easy to see, this merely creates more confusion.

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and Hegel's Logic (New York: Terrell Harvell, 1988); In French, see R. Fausto, *Le Capital et la Logique de Hegel. Dialectique Marxienne, dialectique Hégélienne* (Paris : L' Harmattan, 1997).

173 These two sites have been positivistically separated in traditional Marxism, in which the treatment of Hegel is unfortunate at best, despite Marx's own Hegelianism and despite Lenin's known calls in his *Philosophical Notebooks*. On the one hand, the most prominent Marxists, such as Althusser and Colletti, renounce Hegel because of a misunderstood, one-sided metaphysical idealism that they ascribe to him. Recent Analytical Marxism wholly does away with dialectic. All this happens for the sake of "positive" science. On the other hand, the Hegelian Marxism of early Lukács, Korsh, and the Frankfurt School renounces science for the sake of "criticism." Rare exceptions are Ilyenkov, later Lukács, and Vazuylin. Their works have been extensively cited in the present investigation.

174 See also my note on systems theory above.

In the context of my argument, an example worthy of discussion is Habermas' known criticism of Marx. Insightfully pointing to the social nature and determination of scientific knowledge, Habermas strikingly excludes natural science from such analysis[175] and characterizes Marx's intention for his scientific investigation of political economy as follows:

> This demand for a natural science of man, with its positivistic overtones, is astonishing. For the natural sciences are subject to the transcendental conditions of the system of social labor, whose structural change is supposed to be what the critique of political economy, as the science of man, reflects on. Science in the rigorous sense lacks precisely this element of reflection that characterizes a critique investigating the natural-historical system of the self-generation of the social subject and also making it the subject conscious of this process. To the extent that the science of man is an analysis of a constitutive process, it necessarily includes the self-reflection of science as epistemological critique. This is obliterated by the self-understanding of economics as a 'human natural science.[176]

Habermas here surrenders to the positivistically understood science as the only possible science and hence, as science that fails to reflect. What he actually should be seeking is another, non-empirical science. Moreover, Habermas takes for granted that political economy is the science of man *par excellence,* an interpretation that originated in early Lukács[177] and was reproduced by the

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175 Overseeing that "für Marx gibt es keine Trennung schlechthin von Natur und Gesellschaft, damit auch keinen grundsätzlich methodischen Unterschied zwischen der Naturwissenschaft und der Geschichtswissenschaft." See A. Schmidt, *Der Begriff der Natur in der Lehre von Karl Marx*, p. 43.

176 J. Habermas, *Knowledge and Human Interests*, p. 46.

177 In a dramatically linear interpretation of the idea of totality, the early Lukács refused to recognize the dynamic independence of other sciences. See G. Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness*, trans. R. Livingstone (London: Merlin Press, 1971), pp. 6, 28, 230.

leading philosophers of the Frankfurt School.[178] According to this interpretation, Marx's so-called demystification of Hegel amounts to a flat substitution of the Hegelian *Geist* with social labor, and leads to a form of economic determinism that leaves unclear what happens to the spirit itself. As such a position is clearly unsatisfactory, the problematic of spirit is reintroduced through the Neokantian distinction between *Naturwissenschaften* and *Geisteswissenschaften,* but the difference between nature and spirit remains an opposition without unity.

Political economy describes the *essential* aspect of the social process, the labor process, but is far from being *all* of the social process.[179] The social process is an organic totality of totalities, a unity and diversity. It remains, therefore, to examine a number of other systems[180] that make up the societal whole as well as their interrelations. The supplementation of the labor process by the communicative process (and its fetishism in Habermas' later works) is not the objective of the current argument. My question lies elsewhere. If political economy, the philosophical reflection on economic activity, has been investigated in a systematic *and* critical way, it is unclear why other fields of knowledge could not be subjected to such a philosophically grounded procedure, and why such an investigation would be termed positivistic. My question becomes all the more meaningful if one accepts that those "positivistic" sciences do employ concepts that are dialectical yet un-reflected upon. Further,

178 E.g. T. Adorno, *Hegel: Three Studies*, esp. pp. 22–32; Only A. Schmidt has a distinct approach, namely, "daß alles Naturbewusstsein wie die erscheinende Natur selber historisch-sozial bedingt ist. Natur ist aber für Marx nicht *nur* eine gesellschaftliche Kategorie … Ist Natur eine gesellschaftliche Kategorie, so gilt zugleich der umgekehrte Satz, daß Gesellschaft eine Naturkategorie ist." A. Schmidt, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

179 Adorno admits this issue when he defines spirit as social totality. T. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, p. 314ff.

180 Despite the ocean of bibliography on the subject, the truth is that "the relation of economic practice and other forms of practice … remains an unsolved problem in Marx's theory." T. Rockmore, *Marx after Marxism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), p. 196.

the dialectical nature of the development of science in history should also be beyond question. Finally, if natural sciences stand "under the transcendental conditions of the system of social labor," they are the more *socially defined* sciences and, thus, susceptible to dialectical exposition. For it is hardly disputable that facts of reality may lay there for an infinite amount of time until they become embraced by, and acquire meaning in, the system of human knowledge.

To conclude my argument, I will emphasize that in the conditions of nineteenth-century science, it took Marx a quarter of a century to publish only one volume of the *Capital*. Contemporary knowledge advances in an incomparably faster temp. It is therefore clear that the task of a dialectical-logical exposition of science is a gigantic one. Truth is the result of systematic scientific work. In this context, the truth of social reality should be mediated by scientific investigations of parts of that reality. It should be a totality of totalities. What is sought for the synthetic task of critical philosophical recollection of science is the coordinated work of groups of scientists and also the cooperation between philosophy and science. Regrettably, the conditions under which science is developed today, the infinite split into sub-disciplines without any focus on their interconnections, rather prohibits such cooperation. What one witnesses today, even within one single science, is an infinite division. Within physics, for instance, one finds a growing number of narrow specialists, from nuclear physicists to astrophysicists, etc.

As philosophy, in Hegel's famous expression, amounts to a "thoughtful consideration of things," the dialectical exposition of any particular science is a philosophical *θεώρησις* of this field of knowledge and is by no means a substitution of other methods of tracing it. Philosophy is not an experimental discipline. Philosophical reason employs the devices of empirical science but is not restricted to them.[181] The understanding will continue to propel its

181 Aristotle concludes *Posterior Analytics* by distinguishing between positive science, which investigates being, and reason, which investigates the principles. Science cannot be its own principle, and it is reason that "seems to be the principle of science, the principle of principles; and [reason] is in the same relation to science as science is to all other things"

findings and externally and formally portray its object, reducing the copula to predication. It is only reason, the device of philosophy, that is capable of applying meaning to those constructions.[182] Although reason is the guiding thread in with regard to particular scientific project(s), in which the scientist knows and purposely carries out the given plan, such rational apprehension does not occur with regard to science as a social institution. As Hegel would write, science has not yet become in and for itself.

C. *Objectivity and Method*

Hegel's philosophy posits being as becoming. That being is not identical[183] and is essentially becoming[184] is a paradigm that was gradually established in scientific research during the past two

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("των αρχών επιστήμη μέν ουκ αν είη, επεί δ' ουδέν αληθέστερον ενδέχεται είναι επιστήμης ή νούν, νούς άν είη των αρχών, εκ τε τούτων σκοπούσι καί ότι αποδείξεως αρχή ουκ απόδειξις, ωστ' ουδ' επιστήμης επιστήμη. ει ούν μηδέν άλλο παρ' επιστήμην γένος έχομεω αληθές, νούς άν είη επιστήμης αρχή. και η μεν αρχή της αρχής είη άν, η δε πάσα ομοίως έχει προς το πάν πράγμα." Aristotle, *Posterior Analytics*, B 100, 10–17).

182 We read with Charles Taylor: "But the sciences had already in his own day broken the bounds of the synthesis which Hegel's commentary imposed on them, and although the possibility always remains theoretically of recommencing a synthesizing commentary with each new important discovery, the development of the sciences has made the whole project of a philosophy of nature seem futile and misguided" (C. Taylor, *Hegel*, p. 543). It is unclear why "each new" discovery, no matter how important, should lead to a change in theory and not, for example, the cumulative results of scientific development, e.g., the changes in the Kuhnian "paradigms." Further, it is questionable whether "at Hegel's own day" sciences broke away from the sought synthesis, for the latter is synthesis in the *philosophical* principles. In sum, Taylor's argument pertains rather to the difficulty of the task than to Hegel being "misguided."

183 The law of identity is being challenged even by scientists and philosophers of science. See for example, S. French, and D. Krause, *Identity in Physics: A Historical, Philosophical, and Formal Analysis*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

184 See esp. the work of Nobel Prize winner I. Prigogine, *Order Out of Chaos* (New York: Bantam, 1984).

centuries and backed by the advances of Darwin's evolutionary theory, the theory of the Big Bang, quantum mechanics, the laws of thermodynamics, and many others. If in every part of science there dominates becoming as distinct from inert being, then in the philosophical understanding of science there dominates difference and contradiction as distinct from identity.

In all, the result and most important aspect of Hegel's ontology is that reality is grasped as a totality of totalities, a totality of internally articulated developing complexes that have genesis, development, interaction, and synthesis. The totality of a particular science and the consecutive totalities of several scientific fields converge in the totality of the scientific picture of the world. A scientific totality of the real taken as a whole is in principle possible. Such totality would be the result of a meta-science (better said: a mega-science[185]), a science that would unify the outcome of all other fields of systematic knowledge. If it were possible to philosophically integrate all human knowledge in a totality of totalities, this would be a systematization of what is available at the historical moment of its utterance, and not an eternal recipe. A brief look at the latest developments in the so-called positive sciences makes it clear that the label "final theory" or "theory of everything"[186] that is attached to the pursuit of a unified physical theory is at best metaphorical. Science makes no metaphysical claims. If something is demonstrated in such convergence between micro- and macrophysics, cosmology, mathematics, and several other disciplines, it is the possibility of a unified treatment of nature.

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185 It should be clear that this argument has little in common with the project of unified science advanced in logical positivism.

186 For some non-technical discussions of the search for a "final theory," see B. Green, *The Elegant Universe: Superstrings, Hidden Dimensions, and the Quest for Ultimate Theory* (New York: W.W.Norton & Company, 1999); S. Hawking, *A Brief History of Time. From the Big Bang to Black Holes* (New York: Bantam, 1988); S. Hawking, *The Universe in a Nutshell* (New York: Bantam, 2001); S. Weinberg, *Dreams of a Final Theory* (New York: Bantam, 1992).

According to many, if not most scientists, the "String Theory" (the most recent and most important component of the complex theory that is termed "Final Theory") is a philosophical *a priori* construction that does not accept experimental verification. From a philosophical standpoint, it is worth wondering whether the search for the completion of that complex puzzle is essential to the structure of the object more than to the subjectively propelled concepts, for it remains unknown what number and what kind of "facts" are bypassed in the search process until the one "suitable" to the given theory is found. In this context, I would also add that many of the problems that modern science faces may well be due to the lack of reflectivity upon the conceptual apparatus employed and to the lack of consideration of nature as essentially contradictory.

Thus, Hegel re-emerges. As the dialectic of rationality is in need of the dialectic of the object, the threat of a metaphysical reproach becomes easily discernable. The dialectic of reality may justify the dialectical philosophical exposition of science on the premise that the ideal is recollected from the real, and that the real needs not be described in its ultimate structure or divided into absolute phenomena and absolute essences. To the contrary, it is obvious that the rigidity and unsatisfactory form of the dilemma as *either* appearances *or* thing-in-itself, as ontology *or* phenomenology, as *either* objectivism, *or* relativism. Such a distinction would be important for *philosophia prima,* for pre-Kantian metaphysics. In my view, *philosophia prima* is what Hegelian philosophy presents. Although the unification of the transcendental structure with the manifold is plausibly required by Hegel's dialectic, his analysis expands to the other extreme, the metaphysics of the atemporal *Λόγος* (even though it is understood only through temporality).

An objection to the argument concerning the relationship between philosophical dialectic and natural science pertains to the contrast between empirical singularity and conceptual universality, namely, it is the question of the justification of the use of philosophical categories. This objection is based on a double standard in judging philosophical and scientific claims. If, for instance, the employment of the category of infinity in philosophical reasoning is termed "metaphysics" (for experience allegedly does not permit such a qualification), an equal objection must be

raised in all other sciences: against zoology for using the concept "animal," instead of "dog" or "lion," against chemistry for using the concept "water" instead of "H_2O," against physics for using the concept "universe," etc. One-sided reduction amounts to an infinite regress for human reasoning; any field of inquiry, cannot avoid conceptualization and, thus, universality. Hegel showed that even the simplest concept, e.g., the concept of "salt," encloses in itself universality. It is therefore wrong to claim that the categories of other sciences pertain to the phenomena, whereas philosophical categories necessarily pertain to "metaphysics."

Hegel's system culminates in metaphysics. However, Hegel also shows that any possible metaphysics must be expressed through human logical concepts, and any possible infinite reason (God, the Absolute, etc.) must be articulated through finite human reason. In this way, what I am arguing for are not categories *in general* (e.g., categories of the Absolute), but the categories *of a concrete object of inquiry*. These categories may format a totality of scientific reason, whether as a circle or circle of circles. So long as the final circle of circles is not identical with the Absolute, or presented as an ultimate truth, the argument herein will remain unaffected. Scientific thought, like any thought, inevitably rests on conceptual presuppositions; at the same time, it immanently traces the logic of its object. First, both thought and object exist as processes, and second, no positivistic separation of the two is possible. Thus, object is inevitably grasped by thought historically and relatively. It is true that the claim of the historicity and relativity of cognition is itself a metaphysical position. In tandem, this claim denotes the limits of cognition. Certainty can only be social and historical. If one objects to this argument, the metaphysical *pursuit* is restored. In its epistemological aspect, the objection to the relativity of knowledge would amount to the restoration of the Cartesian anxiety that was reproduced by Kant. I have already discussed how Fichte's appropriation of Kant and Schelling's criticism of Fichte revealed that unqualified epistemological claims lead to metaphysical ones. Hegel moved even further and exposed the dialectical boundaries of rationality, turning logic (and epistemology) into metaphysics and metaphysics into logic (and epistemology). Thus, Hegel brought metaphysics to a closure.

The world opens to the finite subject as a contradictory world. It is another question whether this world *in-itself* is contradictory, finite, infinite, or both, etc. Hegel praises Kant for expressing the necessity of contradiction, but criticizes him for refusing to allow that reason can cognize the infinite: "the result is only the familiar one that reason is incapable of knowing the infinite; a strange result for – since the infinite is the Reasonable (*das Vernünftige*) – it asserts that reason is incapable of knowing the reasonable" (WL1, 52; SL, 56). However, the reasonable for Hegel is not pertinent to human reason alone. Finite reason is identified with infinite reason, and is only therefore capable of cognizing the infinite. Hegel hypostasizes the ability to ideally represent the infinite. The infinite, which Hegel identifies with the absolute *Λόγος*, is not but an infinite of thought, of human thought; it is the product of human rational ability. The question at hand is therefore not ontological, but gnoseological and methodological. Methodologically, Hegel proves that human reason can mediate quality and quantity with measure and make sense of an unbounded process, to posit the finite as infinite, and the infinite as finite, and so on.

With respect to the ultimate constitution of the objective world, that is, ontologically, Kant and Hegel hold opposite positions.[187] In this context one must assess Hegel's constant criticism of the thing-in-itself. Hegel's attacks, occasional or systematic, are always based on the *concept* of the Absolute knowing its own self, its own infinity and infinite possibilities; they reveal the self-contradictory character of the mere *concept* of the thing-in-itself. In other words, Hegel overcomes the thing-in-itself only at the level of thought, to the extent to which metaphysics is identical with logic, that is, only *from within* his own system. He does not and cannot solve the real, ontological question. It is Hegel's metaphysics that permits him to pass from the knowledge of *die Sache selbst*, the matter at hand, to the claim about absolute knowing.

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187 See Paul Guyer's emphatic juxtaposition of the two based on this distinction. P. Guyer, "Thought and Being: Hegel's Critique of Kant's Theoretical Philosophy," in F. Beiser, *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel*, pp. 171–210.

Hegel's criticism of the thing-in-itself is fruitful as long as it points to the internal unity of knowledge and historically given reality and, thus, establishes the unity of transcendental claims and the object. The extent to which Hegel's criticism ends at establishing the metaphysical claim of absolute knowing or knowledge of the absolute remains questionable. That any possible knowledge of the absolute is predestined to be expressed in terms of historically shaped system of rationality, and that this system is equal to true knowledge of the absolute, these are two claims that need to be kept separate. Systematic and apodictic philosophy as the logical examination of historical knowledge is one claim. Metaphysical philosophy as uttering final truths is another claim. Unveiling the intimate connection between the two, Hegel capitalizes on their combination. He not only accepts the challenge of the reduction of metaphysics to logic but also proposes his system of logic as an equally metaphysical system.

Therefore, far from deciphering of the code of creation, Hegel's true philosophical contribution lies with the comprehension of the methodological conditions of involvement in epistemological arguments. In my view, this is the way Hegelian dialectic must be addressed from a contemporary post-Hegelian and post-metaphysical perspective. As possible only once the totality at hand is mature enough to reveal its essential contradictoriness, the dialectical consideration can then unite being and becoming, and identity and contradiction. It unites past and present and thereby projects (but does not necessitate) the future. It is the immanent employment of reason, its unification with historical reality, that makes the rational apprehension of things possible and reveals their contradictory nature, incessant motion, and change. The rational view amounts to the sublation of the one-sidedness, rigidity, and formalism of the understanding, casting the investigation and presentation of the scientific object as a dynamic totality. The indisputable insight of Hegel consists in the connection of the parts with the totality and the transition of one to the other, in the understanding of the living nature of the object. Thus, the object appears as a *concrete* universal. The universal of thought in dialectical logic is a depiction of a real universal which is a systematically determined coming-to-be totality.

Hegel's presentation of the totality in the *Science of Logic* includes the historical method of reaching it. A brief look at this question will complete the current treatise. At the end of the section on the Subjective Logic, having already examined the categorical presuppositions of judgments and syllogisms, Hegel once again[188] disperses the subject into the object in the section on Objectivity. He thereby demonstrates that his Objective Logic had been a presentation of the ways that thought penetrates the object: from being to essence and from essence to actuality. In the Objectivity, in a new spiral, Hegel employs the same method, the method of ascending from the abstract to the concrete. His presentation of Objectivity designates a reflected procedure (namely, that of human spirit or science) which acknowledges its own objective path of cognition.

The movement is from the abstract to the concrete, but the abstract itself is one-sided and presupposes the manifold at its start. The manifold opens to consciousness as chaotic and unsynthesized. The process of putting it together is the task of reflexive thought: "Philosophizing must aim to posit this manifold as internally connected, and there necessarily arises the need to produce a totality of knowing, a system of science" (DZ, 31; Diff., 113). Which would then be the proper way to comprehend and logically reproduce an object in thought?

The abstract is a *concept* (thus, something universal taken as simple) isolated from the totality of its connections and interrelations within concrete totalities. "We have to start with something immediate, but it must not be an immediacy of sense representation, but of thought, hence a categorical concept."[189] This is itself a totality, although "frequently the definition is adopted on the basis of vague conception." (WL2, 524; SL, 804) The initially adopted concept is unclear, for its methodological role is not to distinguish itself as concept, but rather to emphasize

188 The parallel between the beginning and the end of the *Logic*, although obvious, is not frequently addressed by commentators. For a good discussion, see R. Schäfer, *Die Dialektik und ihre besonderen Formen in Hegels Logik*, pp. 239–48.

189 C. Taylor, *Hegel*, p. 340.

the necessary contact with the manifold. This methodological particularity was already discerned by Aristotle. Aristotle's *Physics* begin with the notion not only that in science we must "proceed from what is clearer and more knowable to us"[190] but also that "the things which are in the first instance clear and plain to us are rather those which are compounded."[191] Therefore, one must "proceed from the universal to the particulars."[192] However, this is a specific universal: it is a sensuously perceived universal. Given that every possible object of knowledge is a compound and complicated totality,[193] the object is necessarily perceived at the beginning as a "chaotic" indifferent substance.

In the *Science of Logic,* Hegel makes a similar claim. The subject is ignorant about the object; yet it must begin from something, from the acknowledgment that the object *is*. The object is a chaotic universal that the subject has no further knowledge about. The next methodological step is the division, the analysis. This is the moment of the understanding. Its abstraction takes "a sundering of the concrete and an *isolating* of its determinations; through it only *single* properties and moments are seized" (WL2, 297; SL, 619). Division is carried out down to "exhaustion" or "completeness." The movement toward the individual and the particular will unveil whether the initially adopted definition is a species or a genus and which place that definition will occupy in the final presentation. In the unfolding process, consciousness penetrates the essence of its object. Essence for Hegel has a clear metaphysical connotation as the essence of being *in general*. In the context of the criticism advanced in the current treatise, essence does not manifest itself as a once and for all given explanation but as the essence of a concrete object viewed from within the specific arrangement of historically given rationality.

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190 "διό εκ των καθόλου επί τά καθ' έκαστα δει προϊέναι," Aristotle, *Physics*, 184a 16–17.

191 *Ibid.*, 184a 20.

192 *Ibid.*, 184a 23. See also *Politics* I, 2, 1053a20.

193 "πολλά γάρ περιλαμβάνει ως μέρη το καθόλου," Aristotle, *Physics*, 184a 26.

From the division, one proceeds to construction (WL2, 531ff.; SL, 811ff.). The resulting portrayal of the concrete universal, the totality, is for Hegel identical to the absolute *Λόγος* existing in and for itself (in the corresponding phase of analysis in the *Science of Logic,* Hegel discusses the Absolute Idea). However, Hegel's scheme does not exclude, but implies, real science as immanently utilizing such a methodological procedure. The procedure amounts to the conceptual portrayal of the development of a real object in its particularities from "the crowd of principles" with which the procedure has to conform. Indeed, Hegel demonstrates once again a healthy, flexible realism by stressing the need to follow the object itself and its particularities. The object is reproduced not as a mechanical totality that is "*complete within itself* and has nothing to receive *from without,*" a series of units that have "*passivity* toward another." (WL2, 414; SL, 715). The object is an organic totality, the result of "*synthetic science, of a system, and of systematic cognition*" (WL2, 520; SL, 801). This claim constitutes the core of Hegelian philosophy.

To recapitulate, the movement from being to essence and to actuality, along with the cognitive meaning of a *circular, rational exposition of an evolving contradictory totality* is the way in which I have been arguing that Hegel could be appropriated. If one wants to propel the cognitive claim to its eventual metaphysical ground, then Hegelian metaphysics, the last metaphysics, is inevitable. I will repeat once again along with Heidegger, Foucault and many others: the great absolute idealist will be patiently waiting at the end of the metaphysical road, no matter which road one picks.[194]

My interpretation of Hegel has been advanced as a post-metaphysical criticism. But Hegel is infinitely close to what I am claiming. It has been mentioned already that Hegel's God is in no way the God of traditional philosophizing. What the philosopher rather does is to deify (truly, and not metaphorically) the cognitive

194 One of Derrida's students even argues that Hegel anticipates the criticisms against him. See Catherine Malabou, *The Future of Hegel: Plasticity, Temporality and Dialectic*, trans. Lisabeth During (New York: Routledge, 2005).

power of humanity. Hegel, then, may indeed be interpreted as a historical relativist and as an epistemological antifoundationalist. In this context, he is unquestionably "a daring, brilliant thinker, who perceives the possibility of knowledge in the absence of all foundations. From the latter perspective, Hegel's epistemological theory provides a profound description of the historical process of knowledge. For to a greater degree than anyone before him, he understood knowledge as an ongoing process in which human beings attempt to work out ever wider, more encompassing theories that can only justify themselves progressively and through themselves since there is and cannot be an external justification to sustain them."[195]

It must be said finally that, even from within Hegelian metaphysics, Hegel's conception of truth radically differs from traditional conceptions. Hegel is against any absolute and given once-and-for-all truth whatsoever. For him, there is no abstract truth, but concrete, historical truth. Even the absolute is absolute only insofar as it negates itself. In that sense, Hegel already renounces the traditional role of philosophy, and his pronouncement of its end is to be taken more seriously than usually. Now the new role of philosophy is not yet clear in Hegel – who is still committed to philosophy's old orientations – as it is in post-Hegelian and modern debates. It is only recently that philosophy has abandoned the search of absolute truths and once-and-for-all-given answers. The scarcity of grandiose philosophical systems two centuries after Hegel, the prevalence of post-metaphysical or non-metaphysical thinking, practically confirms Hegel's concept of the end of philosophy. It is true that philosophy begins with wonder, and nobody forbids wondering. However, in the era of science and in a universe in which humanity is no more the center, mythologies and romantic narratives about the creation and essence of the world are remnants of a bygone dimension. The end of philosophy does not signify the end of wonder, but rather the end of characterization of philosophy as the search for eternal truths and the ultimate constitution of the world *per se*. Abandoning its

195 T. Rockmore, *Hegel's Epistemology and Contemporary Philosophy*, p. 39.

old orientation, philosophy can rigorously contribute to the comprehension of the historically given world. This is not tantamount to a relapse into relativism; to the contrary, even the putting of such a question implies an expectation of something absolute *or* relative, and thus repeats, once again, earlier philosophical endeavors.

CONCLUSION

It is only modern philosophical discourse that seems to finally accept the unsurpassable limitations of human reason, the relativity of cognition, and the vanity of the metaphysical pursuit. Departing from such a conviction, I had two underlying motives at the beginning of my research: first, to examine how philosophical analysis can communicate the contradictoriness and dialectic of the social and natural realms; second, to examine how philosophy can be reconciled with the restraints of human finite reason. Both these issues are profoundly examined in the intellectual movement that is known as German idealism. Whereas Kant maintained the second, he only hinted at the first, the dialectic. Whereas Hegel expressed the first with unsurpassable insightfulness, he also renounced the second, the limitation of reason. What I sought in the current work was to examine the possibility of a middle path. Thus, this work aimed at an interpretation of Hegel from the standpoint of Kantian finite reason, so to avoid Hegel's claim of absolute knowing, but to maintain Hegel's claim about the dialectic of reality and of rationality.

By necessity, my point of departure was Kantian philosophy. The introduction of the thing-in-itself aimed at distinguishing that which is attainable by reason, from that which is unknowable. Kant separated finite from infinite reason, the human from the divine, and the epistemological from the metaphysical. At the same time, he introduced his system with an epistemological forcefulness that, as the development of German idealism showed, was doomed to lead back to metaphysics. Properly propelling epistemological certainty, Kant did not persuasively limit it in its historical context; although he properly exposed the difference between the transcendental and the empirical, he did not elaborate their unity; although he properly separated formal from transcendental logic, Kant did not articulate their dialectic. These and several

other ambiguities of Kantian philosophy were highlighted in the current treatise as decisive in the subsequent development of German idealism.

Although Fichte emphasized Kant's epistemological forcefulness, he eliminated the cognitive significance of the thing-in-itself, and essentially amplified the dividedness of critical philosophy. He enforced an epistemological, *transcendental* monism and deduced knowledge from a single principle. However, that principle was grounded on *empirically* tested postulates. In introducing the identity of the I with itself, Fichte pointed to it as a fact that every individual may empirically confirm. Fichte's epistemological monism entirely closed thought within itself, and remained captive to ontological dualism as it proved unable to explain the relevance between the transcendental schema and empirical reality.

The positive outcome of Fichte's appropriation of critical philosophy was shown to be in the radical advance of the dialectic of reason. Once the thing-in-itself was removed by Fichte from the cognitive equation, it then became possible for reason to overcome the antinomies that had troubled Kant. The dialectic, therefore, was for Fichte no more an illusion, but reason's inherent capacity. The thread for the intimate connection of the categories of the mind was thus provided.

However, the issue of the unity of the empirical manifold to the cognitive faculty itself was never solved in Fichte's system. Fichte not only continued to argue from the standpoint of finite reason, he also continued to propel unqualified certainty. It is impossible to hold onto both these claims without metaphysical reliance. This particularity was discerned and scrutinized by Schelling, well before Fichte's theosophical interpretation of absolute knowledge in his late writings. Schelling, thoroughly elaborating the historical *and* natural dialectic, managed to accurately portray the twofold nature of cognition, and decipher the Kantian notion of the *a priori*. In tandem, Schelling revived the metaphysical pursuit of philosophy: not only did he restore the natural origin and historical relativity of the finite cognitive faculty, but he also first attempted to relate finite to infinite reason.

Departing from Schelling's insights, Hegel developed the metaphysical pursuit and elaborated its dialectic, overtly identifying metaphysics with logic. The absolute idealist never criticized

Schelling's metaphysics, but Schelling's inability (or unwillingness) to articulate metaphysics as a completely rational, transparent, and dialectical explanation of the absolute. Hegel's logicism posited itself against Kantian transcendentalism, and demanded the unity between the transcendental and the empirical. At the same time, Hegel's true objective was the interpretation of the transcendental not only as relying on the empirical, but also the transcendental as expressing the transcendent. Only with that latter premise can absolute idealism be completed. Therefore, Hegel's dialectic of reason is not merely the dialectic of reality that reason, being part of that reality, portrays, but also the dialectic of reason itself *through* reality. As my critical analysis of the *Phenomenology* showed, Hegel's reliance on experience is ambiguous (although categorically demanded by him).

Criticizing Hegel's metaphysics, the present work upheld Hegel's portrayal of the dialectical procedure, the dialectic of reason. The advantages of Hegel's approach were found to be in the intersubjective dimension of knowledge and its inherent historicity; in the thorough dialectic of knowledge and its contradictions; and, in the constitutive role of activity in knowledge. The evolutionary epistemologies of Piaget and Vygostky serve as samples of modern scientific research that experimentally, yet without metaphysical ambitions, confirm Hegel's insights into the nature and development of finite cognition.

The other dramatic and still unappreciated contribution of Hegel pertains to his dialectical logic and the notion of contradiction therein. This issue is as difficult as it is rarely addressed. Most frequently, Hegel's stance on logic is misinterpreted, whether critically accepted (e.g. in the attempts to 'formalize' dialectical logic) or thoroughly rejected (in the 'formal' renunciation of Hegel's claims). In my lengthy discussion of dialectical logic and contradiction, I showed that Hegel does advance a challenge to formal logic and enforces contradiction as a cognitive issue of central importance. However, Hegel's criticism aims not at rejecting formal logic *in toto* (and at introducing another formal set of rules next to the ones criticized), but rather at incorporating formal logic, the investigation of the understanding, in the dialectic of reason. It is reason that comprehends its object as a totality, uniting form and content, being and becoming.

For Hegel, reason's cognitive ambition pertains to both the social and natural realms. In exploring this ambition, I came to defend and emphasize Hegel's demand that the concept is a concept *of a really existing process*, and discussed the dialectic of reflective scientific reason. If the 'ideal contour' of the object (the transcendental schema) portrayed by the subjective mind arises in the historical process of transforming that object, what remains to be demonstrated is how the mind 'reconstructs' the image of that concrete object. In other words, it remains to be demonstrated how each particular field of knowledge, each science, reaches its own totality. Cognition can be grounded in historical experience, and not on metaphysical premises; it may thus be relative. Yet, if the cognitive is presented as absolute and ahistorical, then it relapses into metaphysics. The inevitability of such a development is exposed in the intellectual development from Kant to Hegel. But even a metaphysical claim can be conceptualized only in terms of the historically given rationality. Such is the unsurpassable circle of human knowledge that Hegel unveiled; at the same time, such is the path from Hegel to post-metaphysical thinking.

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